

# Under the Apple Tree

By C.H. Spurgeon

*"I sat down under His shadow with great delight,  
and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Solomon's Song 2:3.*

Christ known, should be Christ used. The spouse knew her Beloved to be like a fruit-bearing tree, and at once she sat under His shadow, and fed upon His fruit. It is a pity that we can know so much about Christ, and yet enjoy Him so little. May our experience keep pace with our knowledge, and may that experience be composed of a practical using of our Lord!

Jesus casts a shadow, let us sit under it: Jesus yields fruit, let us taste the sweetness of it. Depend upon it, that the way to learn more, is to use what you know; and, moreover, the way to learn a truth thoroughly is to learn it 'experimentally'. You know a doctrine beyond all fear of contradiction when you have proved it for yourself by personal test and trial. The bride in the song as good as says, "I am certain that my Beloved casts a shadow, for I have sat under it, and I am persuaded that He bears sweet fruit, for I have tasted of it." The best way of demonstrating the power of Christ to save, is to trust in Him and be saved yourself; and of all those who are sure of the divinity of their holy faith, there are none so certain as those who feel its divine power upon themselves. You may perhaps reason yourself into a belief of the gospel, and you may perhaps by further reasoning keep yourself orthodox. But a personal evaluation, and an inward knowing of the truth, are incomparably the best evidences of the reality of divine life in the soul.

If Jesus is as an apple tree among the trees of the woods, do not keep away from Him, but sit under His shadow, and taste His fruit. He is a Saviour- do not believe the fact and yet remain unsaved. As far as Christ is known to you, so far make use of Him. Is not this sound common-sense?

We would further remark that we are at liberty to make every possible use of Christ. Shadow and fruit may both be enjoyed. Christ in His infinite condescension exists for needy souls. Oh, let us say it over again: it is a bold word, but it is true, -our Lord exists for the benefit of His people. A Saviour only exists to save. A physician lives to heal. The Good Shepherd lives, yes, dies, for His sheep. Our Lord Jesus Christ has wrapped us about

His heart; we are intimately interwoven with all His offices, with all His honors, with all His traits of character, with all that He has done, and with all that He has yet to do. The 'sinners' Friend lives for sinners, and sinners may have Him and use Him to the uttermost. He is as free to us as the air we breathe. What are fountains for, but that the thirsty may drink? What is the harbor for, but that storm-tossed boats may find refuge there? What is Christ for, but that poor guilty ones like ourselves may come to Him and look and live, and afterwards may have all our spiritual needs supplied out of His fullness?

We have thus the door set open for us, and we pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to enter in while we notice in the text two things which we pray that you may enjoy to the full. First, the heart's rest in Christ: "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." And, secondly, the heart's refreshment in Christ: "His fruit was sweet to my taste."

I. To begin with, we have here THE HEART'S REST IN CHRIST.

To set this forth, let us notice the character of the person who uttered this sentence. She who said, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight," was one who had known before what weary travel meant, and therefore valued rest; for the man who has never labored knows nothing of the sweetness of repose. The loafer who has eaten bread he never earned, from whose brow there never oozed a drop of honest sweat, does not deserve rest, and does not know what it is. It is to the laboring man that rest is sweet; and when at last we come, toil-worn with many miles of weary plodding, to a shaded place where we may comfortably sit down, then are we filled with delight.

The spouse had been seeking her Beloved, and in looking for Him she had asked where she was likely to find Him. "Tell me," she says, "O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon?" The answer was given to her, "Go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock." She did go her way; but, after a while, she came to this resolution: "I will sit down under His shadow."

Many of you have been sorely wearied with going your way to find peace with God. Some of you tried ceremonies, and trusted in them, and the priest came to your help; but you found that this only mocked your heart's distress. Others of you sought by various systems of thought to come to an anchorage; but, tossed from billow to billow, you found no rest upon the seething sea of speculation. More of you tried by your good works to gain rest for your consciences. You multiplied your prayers, you poured out floods of tears. You hoped, by almsgiving and by the like, that some merit

might accrue to you, and that your heart might feel acceptance with God, and so have rest. You toiled and toiled, like the men that were in the vessel with Jonah when they rowed hard to bring their ship to land, but could not, for the sea rocked and was tempestuous. There was no escape for you that way, and so you were driven to another way, even to rest in Jesus.

My heart looks back to the time when I was under a sense of sin, and sought with all my soul to find peace, but could not discover it, high or low, in any place beneath the sky; yet when "I saw one hanging on a tree," as the Substitute for sin, then my heart sat down under His shadow with great delight. My heart reasoned thus with herself- Did Jesus suffer in my stead? Then I shall not suffer. Did He bear my sin? Then I shall not bear it. Did God accept His Son as my Substitute? Then He will never smite me. Was Jesus acceptable with God as my Sacrifice? Then what contents God, may well enough content me, and so I will go no farther, but: "sit down under His shadow," and enjoy a delightful rest.

She who said, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight," could appreciate shade, for she had been sunburned. Did we not read just now her exclamation, "Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun."? She experienced what heat meant, what the burning sun meant; and therefore shade was pleasant to her. You know nothing about the deliciousness of shade until you travel in a thoroughly hot country; then you are delighted with a respite in the shade. Did you ever feel the heat of divine wrath? Did the great Sun-- that Sun without variableness or shadow of a turning- ever dart upon you His hottest rays, -the rays of His holiness and justice? Did you cower down beneath the scorching beams of that great Light, and say, "We are consumed by Your anger"? If you have ever felt that, you have found it a very blessed thing to come under the shadow of Christ's atoning sacrifice. A shadow, as you know, is cast by a body coming between us and the light and heat; and so, our Lord's most blessed body has come between us and the scorching sun of divine justice, so that we sit under the shadow of His mediation with great delight.

And now, if any other sun begins to scorch us, we fly to our Lord. If domestic trouble, or business cares, or Satanic temptation, or inward corruption, oppresses us-- we hasten to Jesus' shadow, to hide under Him, and there "sit down" in the cool refreshment with great delight. The interposition of our blessed Lord is the cause of our inward quiet. The sun cannot scorch me, for it scorched Him. My troubles need not trouble me, for He has taken my trouble, and I have left it in His hands. "I sat down under His shadow."

Mark well these two things concerning the spouse. She knew what it was to

be weary, and she knew what it was to be sunburned; and just in proportion as you also know these two things, your appreciation of Christ will rise. You who have never pined under the wrath of God have never prized the Saviour. Water is of small value in this land of brooks and rivers, and so you commonly sprinkle the roads with it; but I warrant you that, if you were making a day's march over burning sands, a cup of cold water would be worth a king's ransom. And so to thirsty souls Christ is precious, but not to others.

Now, when the spouse was sitting down, restful and delighted, she was overshadowed. She says, "I sat down under His shadow." I do not know a more delightful state of mind than to feel quite overshadowed by our beloved Lord. Here is my black sin, but there is His precious blood overshadowing my sin, and hiding it for ever. Here is my sinful condition by nature- an enemy to God. But He who reconciled me to God by His blood has overshadowed that also- so that I forget that I was once His enemy, in the joy of being now His friend. I am very weak; but He is strong, and His strength overshadows my feebleness. I am very poor; but He has all riches, and His riches overshadow my poverty. I am most unworthy; but He is so worthy that if I use His name I shall receive as much as if I were worthy: His worthiness overshadows my unworthiness.

It is very precious to put the truth the other way, and say- If there be anything good in me, it is not good when I compare myself with Him, for His goodness quite eclipses and overshadows my goodness. Can I say I love Him? So I do, but in comparison I hardly dare call it love, for His love overshadows mine. Did I suppose that I serve Him? So I would; but my poor service is not worth mentioning in comparison with what He has done for me. Did I think I had any degree of holiness? I must not deny that His Spirit works in me. But when I think of His immaculate life, and all His divine perfections, where am I? What am I in comparison to Him? Have you not sometimes felt this? Have you not been so overshadowed and hidden under your Lord that you became as NOTHING? I know myself what it is to feel that if I die in a workhouse it does not matter as long as my Lord is glorified. Mortals may cast out my name as evil, if they like; but what does it matter since His dear name shall one day be printed in stars across the sky? Let Him overshadow me; I delight that it should be so.

The spouse tells us that, when she became quite overshadowed, then she felt great delight. Great "I" never has great delight, for "I" cannot bear to own a greater than itself. But the humble believer finds his delight in being overshadowed by his Lord. In the shade of Jesus we have more delight than in any fancied light of our own. The spouse had great delight. I trust that you

Christian people do have great delight; and if not, you ought to ask yourselves whether you really are the people of God. I like to see a cheerful countenance; yes, and to hear of raptures in the hearts of those who are God's saints!

There are people who seem to think that religion and gloom are married, and must never be divorced. Pull down the blinds on Sunday, and darken the rooms. If you have a garden, or a rose in bloom, try to forget that there are such beauties: are you not to serve God as cheerlessly as you can? Put your book under your arm, and crawl to your place of worship in as mournful a manner as if you were being marched to the whipping-post. Act this way if you desire; but give me that religion which cheers my heart, fires my soul, and fills me with enthusiasm and delight, -for that is likely to be the religion of heaven, and it agrees with the experience of this inspired Song.

Although I trust that we know what delight means, I question if we have enough of it to describe ourselves as sitting down in the enjoyment of it. Do you give yourselves enough time to sit at Jesus' feet? That is the place of delight, do you abide in it? Sit down under His shadow. "I have no time," cries one. Try and make a little. Steal it from your sleep if you cannot get it any other way. Grant leisure time for your heart to sit down under Jesus' shadow.

It would be a great pity if a man never spent five minutes with his wife, but was forced to be always hard at work. Why, that is slavery, isn't it? Shall we not then have time to commune with our Best-beloved? Surely, somehow or other, we can squeeze out a little season in which we shall have nothing else to do but to sit down under His shadow with great delight! When I take my Bible, and want to feed on it for myself, I generally start thinking about preaching upon the text, and what I should say to you from it. This will not do at all. I must get away from that, and forget that there is a Tabernacle, that I may sit personally at Jesus' feet, and feed upon Him for myself.

And, oh, there is an intense delight in being overshadowed by Him! He is near you, and you know it. His dear presence is as certainly with you as if you could see Him, for His influence surrounds you. Often have I felt as if Jesus leaned over me, as a friend might look over my shoulder. Although no cool shade comes over your brow, yet you may as much feel His shadow as if it did, for your heart grows calm. And if you have been wearied with the family, or troubled with the church, or vexed with yourself, you come down from the chamber where you have seen your Lord, and you feel braced for the battle of life, ready for its troubles and its temptations, because you have seen the Lord. "I sat down" she said, "under His shadow with great delight." How great that delight was she could not tell, but she sat down as one

overpowered with it, needing to sit still under the load of bliss.

I do not like to talk much about the secret delights of Christians, because there are always some around us who do not understand our meaning. But I will venture to say this much -that if worldlings could but even guess what are the secret joys of believers, they would give their eyes to be able to share it with us. We have troubles no doubt, and we admit it- we expect to have them; but we have joys which are frequently excessive. We should not like that others should be witnesses of the delight which now and then tosses our soul into a very tempest of joy. You know what it means, do you not? When you have been all alone with the heavenly Bridegroom, you wanted to tell the angels of the sweet love of Christ to you, a poor unworthy one. You even wished to teach the golden harps fresh music, for seraphs do not know the heights and depths of the grace of God as you know them.

The spouse had great delight, and we know that she had, for this one reason, that she did not forget it. This verse and the whole Song are a remembrance of what she had enjoyed. She says, "I sat down under His shadow." It may have been a month ago, it may have been years ago; but she had not forgotten it. The joys of fellowship with God are written in marble. "Engraved as in eternal brass" are memories of delightful communion with Jesus.

"Fourteen years ago," says the apostle, "I knew a man." Ah, it was worth remembering all those years! He had not told anyone his delightful experience, but he had kept it stored up. He says, "I knew a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell:)" so great had his delights been.

When we look back, we forget birthdays, holidays, and bonfire-nights which we have spent after the manner of men, but we readily recall our times of fellowship with the Well-beloved. We have known our times of 'transfiguration fellowship', and like Peter we remember when we were "with Him in the holy mount." Our head has leaned upon the Master's bosom, and we can never forget the intense delight; nor will we fail to put on record for the good of others the joys with which we have been indulged.

Now I leave this first part of the subject, only noticing how beautifully natural it is. There was a tree, and she sat down under the shadow. There was nothing strained, nothing formal. So ought true piety ever to be consistent with common-sense, with that which seems most fitting, most lovely, most wise, and most natural. There is Christ, we may enjoy Him, let us not despise the privilege.

## II. The second part of our subject is, THE HEART'S REFRESHMENT IN CHRIST.

"His fruit was sweet to my taste." Here I will not enlarge, but give you thoughts in brief which you can beat out afterwards. She did not feast upon the fruit of the tree until first she was under the shadow of it. There is no knowing the excellent things of Christ until you trust Him. Not a single sweet apple shall fall to the lot of those who are outside His shadow. Come and trust Christ, and then all that there is in Christ shall be enjoyed by you. O unbelievers, what you miss! If you will but sit down under His shadow, you shall have all things. But if you will not, neither shall any good thing of Christ's be yours.

But as soon as ever she was under the shadow, then the fruit was all hers. "I sat down under His shadow," she says, and then, "His fruit was sweet to my taste." Do you believe in Jesus, friend? Then Jesus Christ Himself is yours; and if you own the tree, you may well eat the fruit. Since He Himself becomes yours altogether, then His redemption and the pardon that comes from it, His living power, His mighty intercession, the glories of His Second Coming, and all that belong to Him are given over to you for your personal and present use and enjoyment. All things are yours, since Christ is yours. Only be intent that you imitate the spouse: when she found that the fruit was hers, she ate it. Copy her closely in this. It is a great fault in many believers, that they do not appropriate the promises, and feed on them. Do not blunder as they do. Under the shadow you have a right to eat the fruit. Do not deny yourselves the sacred entertainment.

Now, it would appear, as we read the text, that she obtained this fruit without effort. The saying goes- "He who would gain the fruit must climb the tree." But she did not climb, for she says, "I SAT down under His shadow." I suppose the fruit dropped down to her. I know that it is so with us. We no longer spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labor for that which does not satisfy. But we sit under our Lord's shadow, and we eat that which is good, and our soul delights itself in sweetness. Come Christian, enter into the calm rest of faith, by sitting down beneath the cross, and you shall be fed even to the full.

The spouse rested while feasting: she sat and ate. So, O true believer, rest while you are feeding upon Christ! The spouse says, "I sat, and I ate." Had she not told us in the former chapter that the King sat at His table? See how much like that, the Church is to her Lord, and the believer to his Saviour! We sit down also, and we eat, even as the King does. Right royally are we entertained. His joy is in us, and His peace keeps our hearts and minds.

Further, notice that, as the spouse fed upon this fruit, she had a relish for it.

It is not every palate that likes every fruit. Never dispute with other people about tastes of any sort, for agreement in tastes is not possible. That dainty which to one person is the most delicious, is to another person nauseating; and if there were a competition as to which fruit is preferable to all the rest, there would be no settling of the matter. But every person who has once tasted the sweetness of Jesus develops a relish for Him!

Dear hearer, is He sweet to you? Then He is yours. There never was a heart that relished Christ, but what Christ belonged to that heart. If you have been feeding on Him, and He is sweet to you, go on feasting, for He who gave you a relish for His sweet self, gives you all of Himself to satisfy your appetite.

What are the 'fruits' which come from Christ? Are they not peace with God, renewal of heart, joy in the Holy Spirit, love to the brethren? Are they not regeneration, justification, sanctification, adoption, and all the blessings of the covenant of grace? And aren't these each and all sweet to our taste? As we have fed upon them, haven't we said, "Yes, these things are pleasant indeed. There is none like them. Let us feast upon them forever!" Now, sit down- sit down and feed.

It seems a strange thing that we should have to persuade people to do that, but in the spiritual world, things are very different from what they are in the natural. In the case of most men, if you put a plate of food before them, and a knife and fork, they do not need many arguments to persuade them to eat. But I will tell you when they will not eat- and that is when they are full. And I will also tell you when they will eat- and that is when they are hungry. Even so, if your soul is weary after Christ the Saviour, you will feed on Him. But if not, it is useless for me to preach to you, or bid you come and feast on Him. However, you that are there, sitting under His shadow, you may hear Him utter these words: "Eat, O friend: drink, yes, drink abundantly!" You can not have too much of these good things: the more of Christ, the better the Christian.

We know that the spouse feasted herself heartily with this food from the tree of life, for in later days she wanted more. The verse which contains our text describes, as it were, her first love to her Lord, her country love, her rustic love. She went to the woods, and she found Him there like an apple tree, and she enjoyed Him as one relishes a ripe apple in the country. But as she grew in grace, she learned more of her Lord, and she found that her Best-beloved was a King. I should not wonder but that she learned the doctrine of the Second Coming, for in the next verse she began to sing, "He brought me to the banqueting house." As much as to say, He did not merely let me know Him out in the fields-- as the Christ in His humiliation. But He

brought me into the royal palace; and, since He is a King, He brought forth a banner with His own brave insignia, and He waved it over me while I was sitting at the table- and the motto of that banner was love.

She grew very full with this. It was such a grand thing to find a great Saviour, a triumphant Saviour, an exalted Saviour! But it was too much for her, and she became sick of soul with the excessive glory of what she had learned; and do you see what her heart craves for? She longs for her first simple joys, those countrified delights. "Comfort me with apples," she says. Nothing but the old joys will revive her. Did you ever feel like that? I have been satiated with delight in the love of Christ as a glorious exalted Saviour when I have seen Him riding on His white horse, and going forth conquering and to conquer; I have been overwhelmed when I have beheld Him in the midst of the throne, with all the brilliant assembly of angels and archangels adoring Him, and my thought has gone forward to the day when He shall descend with all the pomp of God, and make all kings and princes shrink into nothingness before the infinite majesty of His glory.

Then I have felt as though, at the sight of Him, I must fall at His feet as dead; and I have wanted somebody to come and tell me over again "the old, old story" of how He died in order that I might be saved. His 'throne' overpowers me, let me gather fruit from His 'cross'. Bring me apples from "the tree" again. I am awe-struck while in the palace, let me get away into the woods again. Give me an apple plucked from the tree, such as I have given out to boys and girls in His family- such an apple as this: "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or this- "This man receives sinners." Give me a promise from the basket of the covenant. Give me the simplicity of Christ, let me be a child and feast on apples again, if Jesus is the apple tree. I hunger to go back to Christ on the tree in my stead-- Christ overshadowing me, Christ feeding me. This is the happiest state to live in. Lord, evermore give us these apples!

You recollect the old story we told, years ago, of Jack the converted huckster who used to sing,

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Those who knew him were astonished at his constant composure. They had a world of doubts and fears, and so they asked him why he never doubted.

"Well," he said, "I can't doubt but that I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, for I know that, and feel it every day. And why should I doubt that Jesus Christ is my all in all? for He says He is." "Oh!" said his questioner, "I have my ups and downs." "I don't," said Jack; "I can never go up, for in myself I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all; and I cannot go down, for Jesus Christ

is my all in all."

Jack wanted to join the church, and they said he must tell his conversion experience. He said, "All my experience is that I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, and Jesus Christ is my all in all." "Well," they said, "when you come before the church-meeting, the minister may ask you questions." "I can't help it," said Jack, "all I know I will tell you; and this is all I know-I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all, But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

He was admitted into the church, and continued with the brethren, walking in holiness; but that was still all his experience, and you could not get him beyond it. "Why," said one brother, "I sometimes feel so full of grace, I feel so advanced in sanctification, that I begin to be very happy." "I never do," said Jack; "I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all." "But then," said the other, "I go down again, and think I am not saved, because I am not as sanctified as I used to be." "But I never doubt my salvation," said Jack, "because Jesus Christ is my all in all, and He never alters." That simple story is grandly instructive, for it sets forth a plain man's faith in a plain salvation; it is the likeness of a soul under the apple tree, resting in the shade, and feasting on the fruit.

Now, at this time I want you to think of Jesus, not as a Prince, but as an apple tree; and when this is done, I ask you to sit down under His shadow. It is not much to do. Any child, when it is hot, can sit down in the shade.

I want you next to feed on Jesus: any simpleton can eat apples when they are ripe upon the tree. Come and take Christ, then. You who never came before, come now. Come and welcome. You who have come often, and have entered into the palace, and are reclining at the banqueting table, you lords and princes of Christianity, come to the common woods and to the common apple tree where poor saints are shaded and fed. You had better come under the apple tree, like poor sinners such as I am, and be once more shaded with boughs and comforted with apples, for else you may faint beneath the glories of the palace. The best of saints are never better than when they eat their original fare, and are comforted with the apples which were their first gospel feast.

May the Lord Himself bring forth His own sweet fruit to you! Amen.