

will not be called so, because that was their term for their idol. And, saith David, Ps. xvi. 4, 'I will not take the names of their God in my lips.' See that command also of Moses, Deut. xxiii. 13, 'And in all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect, and make no mention of the names of other gods: let it not be heard out of thy mouth.' They are careful that such words shall not be used as have a show of idolatry; they will have the Lord's service expressed the Lord's own way. Unwary speaking hath been cause of much corruption; and therefore they are so careful to have things done according to the word, that they do not love such names and words as custom and superstition hath a long time used about the ordinances. You shall see, Num. xxxii. 38, it is said there that the Israelites obtained 'Nebo and Baal-meon (their names being changed) and Shibmah, and gave other names to the cities which they built.' Brethren, these were idolatrous names; their cities were called after their idols. Baal was an idol, Judges vi. 31; and Nebo was an idol: Isa. xlvi. 1, 'Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts.' They change not Shibmah; but Nebo and Baal-meon, such names as were scandalous. So they that are truly careful of coming to the written word, they would have no odd names continued; they would not have the Lord's day nicknamed Sunday. They have a pure lip, and would have no unbeseeming word used in the worship of God. Search by this.

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*I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.—CANT. ii. 3.*

IN this verse two things are observable—(1.) Christ's commendation; (2.) The church's experience.

1. Christ's commendation, in the beginning of the verse, where he is compared to an apple-tree among the trees of the forest. Some trees yield no fruit at all, as cedars, firs, and elms; some only yield fruit for swine, as oaks bear acorns. The apple-tree beareth variety of comfortable fruit for men. To this we see Christ is compared, and not to an ordinary apple-tree, but to the tree of life, which is in the midst of the orchard and paradise of God, Rev. ii. 7. And mark, in the context, how Christ and the church are bestowing honour upon one another. Christ avoucheth the church to be the best of all assemblies; and the church avoucheth Christ to be the best of all Gods. The bridegroom beginneth and saith, ver. 2, 'My love is as a lily among thorns,' and the bride answereth, 'My beloved is as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood.' *Quis sicut te?* is twice used in scripture of God and of the church, Micah vii. 17, with Deut. xxxiii. 29. The text falleth in with the latter part—the church's eulogy to Christ. Other trees yield little comfort to a poor fainting creature travelling in the wilderness; but Christ is an apple-tree, comfortable for shade, pleasant for fruit.

2. The church's experience—*I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.* The commendation is built on the church's experience. They that have tasted and felt how

sweet Christ is can better speak of him than others: 2 Cor. i. 4, 'That we may comfort others with the comforts wherewith we are comforted of God.' A report of a report is a cold thing. We can best commend Christ to others when we have felt his virtue and tasted his sweetness ourselves. Two things the church experimented in Christ—(1.) Comfortable shadow; (2.) Pleasant fruit.

[1.] A comfortable shadow. In those eastern countries the scorching of the sun was vehement, and the heat of it much annoyed them in travel, therefore so often is there allusion made to a shadow; as Num. xiv. 9, 'Their defence is departed from them;' it is in the margin their shadow; and so the true God: Ps. xci. 1, 'He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' And that is the reason why the spouse complaineth, Cant. i. 6, 'I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me;' expressing thereby her afflictions, which to us, in these colder countries, seemeth a strange expression. To them rain is always used for a blessing but sunshine often for affliction, they being parched and scorched with excessive heat. And therefore was it that Jonah was so much vexed when he wanted the comfort and shadow of his gourd. We read, Jonah iv. 7, 8, that he was exceedingly glad of the gourd; but when the sun did arise and wither it, and did beat upon his head, he fainted, and wished that he might die. So God, when he promiseth great happiness to his people, saith, Hosea xiv. 8, 'I will be to them a green fir-tree;' meaning a cool and wholesome shadow against the scorching heat of the sun. All this is said to show how comfortable a cool shade was to them in those parts.

[2.] *His fruit was pleasant to my taste.* Christ hath not only a shadow to hide us, but cordial fruit to cheer and revive us. By fruit are meant those spiritual privileges and benefits which we enjoy by Christ, which are sensibly and satisfactorily pleasing to the soul.

*Doct.* Those that earnestly seek after a shelter in Christ from the wrath of God shall not only find that shelter, but many comfortable benefits and fruits accruing to them.

Here I shall show—(1.) What it is to sit down under the shadow of Christ with great delight; (2.) What these fruits are, and how comfortable to a spiritual taste.

*First,* For the first, that I may not strain the metaphor, but take it as it runneth most easily, I shall give you these propositions—

1. A shadow is not prized by men till some heat scorch them. The church is here represented as faint and parched with heat. Our addresses to Christ always begin with a sense of our own want and misery. Ease is sweet to the burdened soul, and none seek rest in Christ to any purpose but those that feel the load of their own sins, Mat. xi. 28. None fly to their city of refuge but those who are sensible of an avenger of blood at their heels, Heb. vi. 18. None desire so earnestly to be found in Christ but those who apprehend a search, that wrath maketh inquisition for sinners, Phil. iii. 9. None are so willing and anxious about entering into an ark as those that fear a flood, Heb. xi. 7. It is the thirsty hart that panteth for the water-brooks; the hart that hath been chased or eaten serpents, Ps. xlii. 1. It was the stung Israelite that did in good earnest look to the brazen serpent, John iii. 14. The scorched only prize a shadow. We have but cold

and careless respects for Christ till the sense of our misery awaken us. Comfort is a relative word, and implieth distress; so doth also justification, and supposeth accusation, or a sense of condemnation deserved.

2. That which scorseth poor distressed souls is a sense of God's wrath. Observe how fitly God's wrath is set forth by the scorching of the sun—a glorious creature, and very useful, whose influences upon the world are usually very benign and comfortable; yet, to accomplish the purposes of nature, he sometimes ariseth with a burning heat. God's goodness is exceeding great and large; yet this good God hath his wrath, which is set forth to us by the notions of a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29, and a burning oven, Mal. iv. 1. The wrath of the living God is a dreadful thing, which consumeth and drieth up all without recovery, unless we get a shelter from it. It was typed out by the fire wherein the sacrifices were burnt; and the sense of it is a scorching thing indeed, which drinketh up our blood and spirits, Job vi. 4. Now, because this sense may be increased in us either by sharp afflictions, or heightened by Satan's temptations through the permission of God, sometimes the heat and sweltering which the soul feeleth upon these occasions is expressed by the burning of the sun, Cant. i. 6; compare also Mat. xiii. 6, 'When the sun was up they were scorched, because they had no root, but withered away;' and ver. 21, 'When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word.' This may awaken a sense of wrath, when God externally appeareth as an enemy. So heightened by Satan's temptations, which are called fiery darts, Eph. vi. 16. His fiery darts are not only boiling lusts, but despairing fears, when the conscience is filled with horror and trouble.

3. Scorched souls can find no shelter nor refreshing shadow among the creatures, but only by coming to the spiritual apple-tree, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Alas! the creatures carry no suitableness nor proportion with our grief; no more than a good meal or a nosegay of flowers to the trouble of a condemned man, or a rich shoe can give ease to a gouty foot. If our trouble were outward want, riches would satisfy it; but when the wrath of God scorseth the conscience, what will riches, or honours, or pleasures do? Ps. xxxix. 11, 'When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, his beauty consumeth as a moth.' Trouble of conscience will not be got off by carnal means. Greatness and beauty and wealth will be no cure or plaster for this fear. Indeed, in a light conviction, we may divert conscience and stupify it by carnal enjoyments, and quench our thirst at the next ditch; but it is but a palliate cure; our wound is skinned over, and breaketh out again in a greater sore. The evil is but put off, not put away; as those, Amos vi. 3, that did drink wine in bowls, and did put far away the evil day. When they do not make a sure peace with God, but all their thoughts are to put judgment out of their mind, they may harden their hearts, but they cannot quiet their hearts; for the virtue of this opium will be soon spent, and the trouble will return more ragingly. God can soon blast the shadow of this gourd, as he did Jonah's; or else he may give you over to a stupid conscience; and a lethargy is a very dangerous disease.

4. Christ is a complete and comfortable shadow, the only screen between us and wrath. Observe how fitly Christ's interposing between

us and the wrath of God is set forth by the shadow of a tree interposed between us and the heat of the sun. In him alone we find refreshing, ease, and comfort: Mat. iii. 17, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' God is appeased in Christ towards us; he is the shadow which we have against the wrath of God, even Jesus, who hath delivered us from wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10. He hath drunk hell dry. To redeem us from the curse of the law he was made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. He hath borne the wrath of God in his own person that we might have the blessing, the gift of the Spirit. So he is a shadow against the fiery darts of Satan; nothing will guard us, and help us to quench them, but the shield of faith, Eph. vi. 16. This faith in Christ we hold up as a shield against his violent and piercing temptations, and so quench that heat and pain and horror which otherwise these temptations would kindle in our hearts. We answer his bitter accusations by Christ's righteousness. Then, for the troubles and afflictions of the world he is still our shadow: John xvi. 33, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have rest.' A storm rattling upon the tiles doth not much dismay you when you sit warm under the covert and protection of a strong roof. God promiseth his people, Isa. xxv. 4, to be 'a shelter from the storm, and a shadow from the heat;' and Isa. iv. 5, 'The Lord will create upon the assemblies of Mount Sion a cloud and a smoke by day, and a shining of a flaming fire by night.' It is an allusion to the Israelites in the wilderness; he shadowed them by day with a cloud, and lighted and heated them with a fiery pillar by night. As we travel to our heavenly rest, we need light and we need shelter; we have both from Christ.

5. Faith is necessary, that we may have the comfort of our shadow; for we make use of Christ by faith. There are three acts of faith—(1.) They choose, consent, and own Christ as the only shadow; (2.) They earnestly run to it; (3.) Compose and quiet their hearts under it. For some make this sitting down as an act of spiritual desire; as Junius, *Summe desidero ut sedeam*—I earnestly desire that I may sit down. Some as an act of spiritual delight; as our translation, 'I sat down with great delight.' However, both are implied.

[1.] Here is a choice and owning of Christ as the only shadow against wrath. They that would find Christ a shadow must use him and employ him to that end; as Ps. xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' The qualification and the promise is the same. What is abiding in the shadow of the Almighty but dwelling in the secret place of the Most High? God is to his people what they take him to be. Dwell in God, and you shall dwell in God. If you will take God to be what he offereth himself to be, and hath promised to be, you will find him actually and indeed to be so when need shall require, and you make use of him to that end. So delight is rewarded with delight, Isa. lviii. 13, 14; and courage and strength of heart with strength of heart, Ps. xxvii. 14, and Ps. xxxi. 24; for God loveth to make good the undertaking of faith, and will every way answer his people's expectations. If God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, a screen between you and wrath, use him as such; run to your spiritual apple-tree. Surely Christ can only shelter us from the wrath of God; and

faith, which maketh use of Christ to this end, can only give us an interest in this benefit: Ps. ii. 12, 'If his anger be but kindled a little, blessed are they that trust in him.' Deliverance from wrath is the fruit of embracing Christ, or closing in covenant with him; those that betake and apply themselves to him as their only refuge and safety. A carnal man is to seek; in the midst of all his worldly comforts he hath not a true shadow or a true place of retreat from the heat of God's wrath. When God frowneth they know not whither to go. If God let loose conscience or Satan against them, all worldly comforts are soon dried up. Wealth, honour, riches will not stead them in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4; much more when he summoneth them into his presence: Rev. vi. 16, 'They shall call to the mountains, and say, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne.' Oh! what would they give then for a shelter!

[2.] This work must not be done sleepily, but in the greatest earnest. The original phrase expresseth a vehemency of desire of this shadow to overshadow them. Such a desire should we have after Christ and his righteousness. Oh! that I might be found in him! And all is nothing to this, that I may gain Christ, Phil. iii. 8.

[3.] This sitting down with great delight noteth the composing and quieting the soul in Christ. Here they have ease and rest when once gotten to sit down under his shadow. So that it is not a bare choice, but such as is accompanied with desire and delight.

6. They meet not only with coolness, but fruit; as an apple under an apple-tree to one that sits under its shadow in a great heat. Christ yieldeth not only a comfortable shadow to believers, but also pleasant fruit. We are not only sheltered from wrath, but we may take and eat the apples of paradise. The mercies of the covenant are not only privative, but positive, Ps. lxxxiv. 11, and Gen. xv. 1. There is shadow on a fir-tree, but fruit on an apple-tree. The returning prodigal desired only to be accepted into the family, to be made an hired servant, to be kept from perishing; but the father maketh a hire, Luke xv. It was as much as our thoughts could reach to, to be delivered from hell and wrath to come; but God will give abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness by Christ Jesus, Rom. v. 15. We shall not only enjoy his shadow, but taste his fruit.

*Secondly*, My next inquiry is, what these fruits are? They are the benefits and the privileges which we have by Christ. Mark, here is—(1.) Fruit; (2.) *His* fruit; (3.) Sweet to our taste.

1. Here is fruit. Christ received of the Father the fulness of power and of the Spirit for the benefit of the redeemed, that he might shower down the streams of grace on all that repair to him for relief and succour. Now what these fruits are—

[1.] In the general, we may tell you, all that is worth the having we have from Jesus Christ; all the blessings of this present life and of the world to come: 1 Cor. iii. 21–23, 'All things are yours, because you are Christ, and Christ is God's.' We lost our right to all by sin, and Christ came to restore all to us, ordinances, providences, heaven, happiness, and death, as the couple between the worlds. All things that concern life natural: Rom. viii. 32, 'If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also

freely give us all things?' All things that concern maintenance, protection, food, raiment, safety during our service; all things that concern life spiritual, 2 Peter i. 3; to keep alive grace in the heart, to express it in the conversation. For the other world we have eternal life, 1 Tim. iv. 1. All things here hath a subserviency to that life, Rom. viii. 28.

[2.] More particularly, there are many choice and excellent fruits which believers receive from him.

(1.) The pardon of all our sins: Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of sins;' sin, which is such a mischief to us, such a wrong to God. The wrong done to infinite justice was so great that the Son of God must come and shed his blood before there could be a sufficient ransom given to keep up the honour of God's government. We cannot be sufficiently apprehensive of so great a benefit. So Acts xxvi. 18, 'We are turned from the power of Satan to God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.' Is not this a sweet fruit, to have a free and full forgiveness of all our sins and daily failings? Isa. lv. 7. What is it that troubled us before we were acquainted with Christ but sin? What is it that made God terrible to us but sin? that clogged our consciences, disabled us from serving him cheerfully, but sin? that rendered us sly of God's presence, but sin? that damped our hearts in all our afflictions, but sin? that stood in the way of all our mercies and hopes, but sin? Surely, if we can get rid of sin, this is a benefit that is not lightly to be passed over.

(2.) Peace with God: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' God, that was formerly an enemy, is now a friend; the war between us and heaven ceaseth. Tyre sought peace with Herod, because they could not subsist without him, Acts xii. 20. Certainly 'in him we live, move, and have our being.' He could destroy us every moment. He hath sent messengers to tell the world of this peace, Acts x. 36, preaching peace by Jesus Christ. God's messengers come to you with an olive branch in their mouths, proclaiming and offering this peace to all that are willing to enter into it, and cast away the weapons of their defiance.

(3.) Adoption into God's family, John i. 12, and 1 John iii. 1. David could say, 'Seemeth it a light thing to you to be a king's son-in-law?' So may I say, to have the blessed God, whom we had so often offended, to become our reconciled father in Christ; and it will not be an empty title, but justified and filled up with answerable privileges as to us: Mal. i. 6, 'If then I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?' God, that disliketh empty titles on our part, will not put us off with an empty title.

(4.) The heirs of glory: 'For if children, then heirs, co-heirs with Jesus Christ,' Rom. viii. 17. Children shall have a child's portion: 'He hath begotten us to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,' 1 Peter i. 3, 4; and Titus iii. 8, 'Being justified by faith, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' All God's children have an ample inheritance kept for them; it is secured to them by the

promise of the faithful God, and possessed by Christ in their name, and in due time is bestowed on themselves, Rom. vi. 8.

(5.) The Holy Ghost is given, not only to sanctify us at first, but to dwell in our hearts as a constant inhabitant, as in his own temple, 1 Cor. vi. 19, to maintain God's interest in our souls, to conquer the devil, subdue the flesh, and overcome the world; to resist the devil, 1 John iv. 4; to subdue the flesh, Rom. viii. 13; to overcome the world; for, 1 Peter i. 5, 'We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' The Spirit succoureth us in all our extremities—that is, by the power of his Spirit dwelling in us. By this Spirit we are cleansed more and more from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, sanctified throughout, and fitted more and more for the enjoyment of that eternal happiness we are appointed unto.

(6.) Peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost; for this is a great privilege of Christ's kingdom, Rom. xii. 17. The Spirit, indeed, is not so necessarily a comforter as a sanctifier; and yet this is part of his work, to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, Rom. v. 5. To assure us that we are his children, Rom. viii. 16; and to be the earnest and fore-pledge of our everlasting happiness: 2 Cor. v. 5, 'Who hath given us the earnest of his Spirit.'

(7.) Access to God, with assurance of welcome and audience, Ps. l. 15, and Heb. iv. 15, 16, and 1 John v. 14. This confidence we have, that 'Whatsoever we shall ask in his name, he will do it for us.' Oh! what a mercy is it that we have a father to go to! that our persons and services should be acceptable and pleasing to him for Christ's sake! We find the comfort of it living and dying. These are some of those fruits which grow upon this spiritual apple-tree.

2. *His* fruits; for a threefold reason—

[1.] Because purchased by him. All these privileges were procured for us by his blood, death, and sufferings. Pardon of sins: Col. i. 14, 'In whom we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' God would not cancel our debts till he had received this satisfaction. Peace with God: Col. i. 20, 'Having made peace through the blood of his cross.' It stood the Mediator dear that we might enjoy God's peace and favour with life. Adoption into God's family; it is the fruit of his sufferings or being made under the law: Gal. iv. 4, 5, 'Heirs of glory.' We are purchased unto everlasting redemption, Eph. i. 14. The sanctification of the Spirit, Eph. v. 25, 26. Peace of conscience: 'This man our peace,' Micah v. 5. Audience: Heb. x. 19, 'We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' So that he purchased all these favours for us.

[2.] These fruits flow from him; for as he purchased them, so he hath the keeping and dispensing of the purchased benefits; for he hath purchased this grace, not into another's hand, but into his own. He doth by the Spirit sanctify and bring back the souls of men unto God. Therefore it is said, John i. 16, 'Of his fulness have we received, and grace for grace.' And whatever the Spirit doth, he doth for his honour and glory, and as his Spirit: John xvi. 14, 'He shall take of mine, and glorify me.'

[3.] It is enjoyed by virtue of an interest in him, as we are members of his mystical body: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are ye in Christ,

who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness.' First we are in him, and then he is made to us of God all that we stand in need of. When we are engrafted into Christ we partake of his benefits: 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life,' &c.; John xv. 1, 2, 5, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' So that by virtue of our union with him, and interest in him, we receive these fruits.

3. These are sweet unto a believer's taste. Observe there—

[1.] That believers have a taste of the goodness of Christ. They do experimentally find a great deal of comfort and sweetness in him: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' Others know Christ by hearsay, they by experience. They know 'the grace of Christ in truth,' Col. i. 6. We use to say, *Optima demonstratio est a sensibus*—Things talked of do not affect us so much as things tasted and felt. He that hath tasted honey knoweth the sweetness of it more than he that only reads of it. Therefore we ought to get this taste—that is, an inward experience of the truth and goodness of heavenly things; for christian religion is a thing not only to be understood, or disputed, or talked of, but also tasted. Moral instruction may give a sight, but faith a taste.

[2.] That Christ's fruits are very sweet to their taste, because of the suitableness of the fruit to the prepared appetite. They have an hungry conscience, and so can sooner taste that sweetness. As a man is, so is his appetite. The beasts find sweetness in grass, swine in their swill, more than an epicure in all his dainties. Among men, every constitution of heart affecteth a suitable diet. In the general, the carnal relish only carnal things. More particularly, some worldly men, like the serpent, feed on the dust of the ground. Some vain-glorious men, like the cameleon, live upon the air and breath of popular applause; the sensual, on the husks of brutish pleasure. But a christian's delights are on Christ, the promises of the gospel, and the fruits of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 12. A christian hath another spirit than the spirit of this world. A sanctified soul can taste the sweetness of spiritual things, word, sacraments, graces, hopes. Yea, the way of obedience is sweet to them: Prov. iii. 17, 'Her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' It is wonderfully comfortable, and filleth their hearts in a satisfying manner, when they can have any experience of God's love in Christ, in the word, or meditation, or prayer, or sacraments: 'My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness,' saith David. Ps. lxxiii. 6. Besides the attractive goodness of the object, there is inclination in their own souls to it.

*Use 1.* Here is an invitation to draw us to Christ.

1. As he is a shadow. This notion is like to prevail with none but those who are scorched with God's wrath, or laden with the burden of sin; with them that are either of a troubled or of a tender conscience. They long to sit down under his shadow indeed, and to get a taste of his pleasant fruits; yet I must speak to all, to begin here. The fruits are neither eaten nor the sweetness of them felt till we come under his shadow, and delightfully sit under his righteousness; but I pray you all to consider what need we have of this—(1.) Consider our own deservings: 'Are we not all children of wrath even as



others?' Eph. ii. 3. If we are grown insensible, the greater is our misery; and doth it not concern you 'to fly from wrath to come'? Mat. iii. 7. Because as yet we feel not the scorching and broiling heats, should we not make sure of a shelter? If a spark light upon the conscience, if God's anger be kindled but a little, what a condition are you in! (2.) A drooping soul that mourneth under the fears of God's displeasure, how doth he value this? The afflicted and poor of the flock, they will trust in the name of the Lord, Zeph. iii. 12; and should we not value that which is prized by them that are more serious than ourselves? (3.) When you must appear before the bar of God when you are to die, a shelter and a screen between you and wrath will be very welcome, Rev. vi. 16. What would you give then for a sealed pardon, for an interest in Christ's righteousness, for a propitiation or means of atonement between you and an offended God? (4.) The damned in hell, that are lost for ever, who are scorched in eternal flames, and have made trial of that sad condition, what would they give? Luke xvi. 24, 'Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am horribly tormented in this flame.'

2. With respect to pleasant fruit: Ps. xxxiv. 8, 'Oh! come, taste and see how good the Lord is to those that put their trust in him.' We entertain black thoughts of the ways of God, as if religion were a sour thing, and there were no pleasure and delight for those that submit to it. Augustine and Cyprian were both kept off by a fear that they should never see merry day more; as, indeed, it is hard for pleasant natures wholly to renounce accustomed delights. To confute this prejudice, if you will not believe the spies who have visited the land of promise, and passed it through, and have brought a good report thence, told you how pleasant and sweet the fruits thereof are, come and make trial yourselves. Oh! taste and see. You will find enough in Christ to spoil the gust and relish of all other pleasures. *Quam suave mihi subito factum est carere suavitatibus nugarum.* As the sun puts out the fire, so doth this greater delight make carnal vanities tasteless to you. Surely all Christ's fruits will be sweet to you. Is it not sweet to hear that voice, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are pardoned'? Mat. viii. 2; so 'I will be to you a father, and you shall be my children.' The comforts of the Spirit, are they not the sweetest things that ever were felt? Peace, Phil. iv. 7; joy, 1 Peter i. 8; yet these are but part of his wages. If Christ be sweet in the ordinances, what will he be in heaven?

*Use 2.* Do we ever sit down under his shadow, so as to find his fruit sweet unto our taste? You may try your state, and discern it by your relish of spiritual things. When men find no savour and sweetness in Christ, and can enjoy full contentment and satisfaction without him, it is a dangerous sign of a carnal heart, Rom. viii. 5, and Luke xiii. 16. I am sure it is an humbling consideration. The grossy carnal heart can taste the sweetness of the creature, but not of Christ. To an unmortified heart there is no more taste of Christ than in the white of an egg. The promises are but as dry chips and withered flowers. Christ crucified is no feast to them; they are pleased better with a vain story, or any carnal recreation or sensible

enjoyment, or the mirth of vain company. They long not for, nor ever taste, the apples of paradise, or the fruit which groweth upon the tree of life.

But are christians to be measured by their feelings, tastes, or comforts?

I answer—The taste of the sweetness of Christ's fruits may be considered either with respect to God's dispensation or our duty and disposition of soul.

1. If you consider it as an act of divine dispensation, or an impression of the comforting Spirit, this dependeth upon God's pleasure, who sheddeth abroad his love in Christ in our hearts by the Spirit in what measure he pleaseth. These spiritual suavities or high tides of comfort God letteth out upon special seasons, after deep meditation, earnest and strong desires, sad conflicts with sin and the world, or great struggling by pangs of trouble. As we give children a piece of sugar after a bitter potion, so to him that overcometh, God giveth to eat of the tree of life in the midst of paradise, Rev. ii. 7, and ver. 17 'hidden manna,' &c. This is Christ's feast for conquerors or triumphers. For this we must wait upon God in his sanctuary, leaving him to his own pleasure, and be content till the master of the feast bid us come and sit higher.

2. There is a state of spiritual things which is a necessary duty, when these things please us better than any worldly things whatsoever. To be holy is more contentment than to be rich. To love God more, trust him more, and obey him better, please more than if God should give them all the honours of the world. This taste is known more by esteem, admiration, thankfulness, and solid contentment, than by passionate joys; yet they should be excited on special occasions. They are never so well pleased as when they enjoy most of God, have a sense of his presence. Never so satisfied as when they are most fruitful, as when most powerfully drawn out after God. This taste must be cherished, and still kept up in us. Affectionate stirrings and workings of soul after heavenly things are very sweet, and such as all christians should strive for; yet esteem, choice, and thorough willingness and well-pleas'dness with Christ are the main things. You must not be dead-hearted; therefore you must take heed of those things which would deaden your taste. What are they?

[1.] Want of faith. Such worthy things could not be entertained with such coldness if we did believe them true: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'To them that believe, Christ is precious;' and if he be precious, we will give him a suitable welcome into the heart; we will entertain him as we do precious things. A carnal wretch may talk of Christ as others do, but to him Christ and his gospel is a common thing, because he hath no sound belief of these things, only a little human credulity. Affection still followeth persuasion, Heb. xi. 13. We look for no great matters, therefore go no higher than a customary devotion or a cold respect.

[2.] We are governed by fancy, sense, and carnal appetite; and the carnal gust will mar the taste of heavenly things. The joys of sense are natural to us, and the joys of faith are strangers to our hearts; and then it is no wonder that the one does easily vanquish and

overcome the other. British worldlings rest satisfied with worldly contentments and carnal delights, and the taste of the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world spoil the taste of spiritual comforts. Garlic and manna will never suit the same appetite. The heightening of the world lesseneth our esteem of Christ, 1 John ii. 15. Conscience is stupefied with vain delights. When we come to say, Soul, take thine ease; thou hast goods laid up for many years; then better things are coldly entertained. Spiritual things lose their sweetness when your pleasure is intercepted by the things you enjoy in the world.

[3.] Some sin is regarded in the heart, rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue. And if sin be grown sweet, spiritual delight languisheth; for something else pleaseth us better; as a sucker draweth away the strength of the tree, or as a leak in a pipe lets out the water, or a wound in the body weakeneth the strength. Yea, till sin grow bitter to us, nothing in Christ will relish with us; for Christ came to take sin away; and till sin be sin indeed, grace will never be grace indeed.

[4.] If you do not prepare your appetite by self-examining, 1 Cor. xi. 28, and confession of sin. Humiliation for our unworthiness, reconciling ourselves to God upon new covenant terms, hearty resolutions for God, a deep sense of our wants, these things breed an appetite and desire of grace; and hungry consciences know how to prize the food. Be sure to do thus, and then you will find a well-pleasèdness in Christ; and say, 'His love is better than wine,' Cant. i. 2. His loving-kindness is better than life. If the affections be not ravished, there will be at least a solid esteem; at least you will find that 'one day in God's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere,' Ps. lxxxiv. 10. There is a solid complacency in Christ, and a serious joy, that is more durable than sudden transports of soul.

*Use 3.* Direction to us in our special addresses to God. The practice of the spouse is then in season. Come and sit down under his shadow, and eat of his fruits. I remember Solomon saith, Prov. xxvii. 18, 'Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat of the fruit thereof.' So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured. When you come to duties, you come to sit under the spiritual apple-tree, to wait upon your master for your dole and portion. We taste the fruits of Christ most in solemn ordinances: Ps. xxxvi. 8, 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house;' so Ps. lxxv. 4. And they are not sparingly dispensed. The spiritual apple-tree is fully laden, and you may eat and feed abundantly with his blessed allowance, Cant. v. 1. Only remember, if you would find God's favour and presence in the mercies, you must use diligence; for we come to partake as well as receive. When we hear or pray loosely, with slackness and remissness of zeal, we lose the comfort of these duties. So in the Lord's supper you must exercise faith, and repentance, and love, and thankfulness to your Redeemer. All the benefits we enjoy are Christ's fruits, his by purchase and right and from him communicated to us. Serious thoughts, and an active lively faith is required, that you may take and give up yourselves to Christ in an humble obedience.