

Passivity and activity in seeking Christ (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Collier, Gilbert (1900-1984)

[0 : 00] The text is found in the Song of Solomon.

The second chapter, the third verse. The second chapter, the third verse of the Song of Solomon.

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sun.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and whose fruit was true to my taste.

There are always the presence of two outstanding experiences, where there is real life and true belief in God.

[1 : 28] And those two things are these. First of all, there is a passivity in the experience.

It's a very important and very needful experience indeed. A passive time of seeking after God, when there does not seem to be any movement on the part of God.

And when it seems almost as if our waiting for God is in vain.

But we come to this point that the beloved bride came to, where she can distinguish the great need for him whom her soul loves.

And coupled with this passivity, there is always activity, always bound to be activity.

[2 : 52] Sometimes it follows very swiftly after a period of passiveness in the believer's experience.

Sometimes it may linger long, and it might be quite a considerable time before there is any real movement which constitutes activity brought into the experience of the believer.

Well, we have these two things in our text. We were dealing with the former this morning, where we noted how the beloved bride sees a mighty difference in her beloved.

But she can no more go beyond this point. She sees him as among the sons.

She sees him as incomparable. When she tries to compare him, if she does, with the sons, he is outstanding, supreme, beyond all compare.

[4 : 28] But she can only see him in this night. And so far she seems to have a very clear worth of grace in her soul.

Because as we said this morning, this text demonstrates the value of first things, first time, that there is such an experience in a person's heart, where they begin to see the differences in things.

When they begin to see that what the world seems to have and possess is very different from what the Christian possesses.

And furthermore, they begin to see that there is a vast difference in the truth of God from all that is contrary to it.

And then they come nearer to their own hearts, and they see that there is a difference in their own experience, a difference from what there was when they had no fear of God in their hearts, when they were gladly and glibly going in the pathway of the world.

[6 : 07] They now begin to see that there is something vastly different. They may not be able to lay their fingers upon the causes, but they know the fact of it.

And they can see this and realize it. They're conscious of it. that there is a mighty difference in their experience.

Now, isn't that the case with you? Have you come to a time in your life when you find that you're passing through things that are very, very different from what once you passed through?

In fact, you've never really had anything, any acquaintance with these things. The Word of God, the worship of God, had no real meaning.

The matters of your soul had no weight, no real importance. Where you were going, finally, was not a matter of very great concern with you.

[7 : 22] You could put it off. You could obliterate it very easily into the dim distance of your mind and thoughts.

But now, you cannot allow these things to be put on one side. there's a great difference in the importance of them in your mind and in your heart.

Now, this is the position which this beloved bride was in. She couldn't really say, this beloved bridegroom is mine.

She couldn't really go as far as this and say that he is. Why, I would have him as my bridegroom. There'd be nothing more desirable to me than to know that he is, that he has his eye upon me and that his affections might be fixed upon me as they, mine I feel, are upon him.

But, you see, she can no more say that he is mine than she can say anything, really. But she can go as far as this as the apple tree among the trees of the wood.

[8 : 57] So, is my beloved among the sons. The Song of Solomon, as you know, is just before the prophecy of Isaiah and we are speaking from the second chapter and the third verse.

Now, this then is the passive side of a person's religion and experience.

They will not remain there all the days of their lives. The Lord will see to those. He will bring them out. He will lead them on.

And he will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. And above all, he will enter into a sweet, revealed relationship between himself and their soul.

Now, this will be the active side of their experience. And we have it in the latter part of our text which I want to deal with tonight.

[10 : 11] Where she says, here, she says, I sat down under his shadow. Now, that's a very simple thing, but it shows an activity.

That's what I want to impress upon you this evening. Even though it's only sitting down, it suggests and is indeed an active thing that she did.

she sat down under his shadow. And it, first of all, demonstrates that there was nearness now between the bride and the bride.

she had been viewing him a distance, at a far distance. She had seen him among the trees of the wood. She had seen that he was outstanding in beauty, even among those trees.

But now, she comes and she takes up her posture under his shadow, which denotes nearness to her.

[11 : 37] She's now come into a very blessed place. She is near to the one she loves, the one she desires to love, the one she hopes may love her, and that they both may be joined together in the blessed bonds of that love.

I sat down, she says, under his shadow. Now, this sitting down is something that I want us to ponder this evening very carefully, and that is this.

First of all, it denotes, as I say, nearness to the one she loves. You want to get near to the Lord if you've really been called by his grace.

You cannot bear to be separated from her. And anything that is liable to separate you, you will want to remove from your life.

That's an important thing in real experience, a desire for the nearness of our souls to Christ. And that we are content to sit in the shadow if we can only get it.

[12 : 54] people do not want limelight who come to Jesus Christ and who want him.

He is everything. He is the altogether lovely one. And they are quite and perfectly content to be nothing, providing that he is with them and they with him, I sat down.

This is a positive act of faith on the part of the God. And then secondly, it denotes repentance.

I sat down. there is a measurable amount of meaning in these words. Repentance is the essential quality and qualification of those who come to Jesus Christ.

We never really come to him without repentance. Repentance is God's gift and it's God's requirement. God says to all men, whether they are his or not, that they should repent.

[14 : 18] You see, all have sinned and therefore there's no other thing that men need but repentance.

And it's true to say all men should repent. It does not, mind you, does not mean for one moment that all men will repent. or that all men can repent.

But there's one thing very clear and very definite and that is this, with all the real believing people of God, there is and will be a real repentance.

And that repentance is the doorway into the kingdom of God. I sat down. What an expressive word this is.

What a blessed thing if we can say it. I sat down. Then another thing it means this, resignation.

[15 : 26] a real believer has to be taught how to resign, how to give up, how to be nothing in their own view, and how to completely divest themselves of all their fancies and all their imagined rights that they thought were so dear and so precious to them.

They have to resign completely to the Lord. I sat down. It means resignation. Now this is one of the hardest things for such as you and me to enter into.

We are quite willing at times to give a good deal to the Lord, but there are sometimes an unwillingness in us to give all to him.

Take my heart, my life, my all, and make them live. There is such a resistance against that, found in our own hearts.

You have to acknowledge it. I have to acknowledge it. And until the grace of God has eliminated that spirit from us, we are never really able to say, I sat down.

[17 : 11] But oh, what a wonderful thing resignation is when we can give everything up for Jesus Christ. When Paul could say this, I count all things but dumb and dross that I may win Christ, he was saying what is demonstrated here in this text of mind and life.

He was saying this, I sat down under his shadow. I was willing to lose myself in Jesus Christ, losing all my own confidence and all my own self-righteousness and all that was mine to have it all submitted and submerged in the love of Christ.

Now that is what it means, I sat down. Then again it means this, not only nearness, resignation and repentance but she says further under his shadow.

Now there again is another expression full of wonderful meaning. under his shadow. And here we can well see she was willing to submit to him to be nothing in and of herself.

She was willing for him to take over completely the whole control of her life. She wanted not to be in any degree whatever in the light to be noticed, to be observed, to be recognized.

[19 : 09] She wanted only one thing, to be completely shadowed by Christ, to be covered with the mantle of his wonderful love, to be under the wing of his wonderful grace and mercy and his truth under his shadow.

What a place to be in. People you know can never really come to this one place where they have to lose sight of themselves.

us. We do like by nature we love to be in the limelight. We like to be taken notice of. We hate to be cold shouldered or ignored.

If we think our fellow creatures are in any way ignoring us or not paying all the attention to us that we deserve, we are hurt, we are injured, injured.

We may harbour for days and days and months and months it might be, some degree of enmity and of injury. And why is it?

[20 : 26] Because we want to be in the light. We want to be noticed. We want to be taken account of. We want to be somebody. We want to be something.

But the Lord comes along, he says this. Here's the shadow. This is the best place for you, poor sinner. Hide under my infinite and wondrous love.

Let that covering be thine, which covers all thy blemishes and all thy sins, and hides thee from all the scrutiny of divine justice.

Let that be the shadow of my wings, where thou shall find everlasting rest and peace, under his shadow.

Yes, and also it would mean this, the submerging and the subordination of all our wills to the Lord's will, under his shadow.

[21 : 44] Or we like to keep our own will intact, because we think that we've got a wisdom that is far more able to direct our way, even than the Lord.

And sometimes we feel almost unwilling to put all things into the hand of the Lord. We almost doubt whether the Lord really will take or can take our way into his hands and sort out our intricate pathway.

And we resist that real subordination temptation of our own will to the will of the Lord.

But when a poor sinner comes to that point and desires that not their will but his be done in everything, they very often find the solution of their problem and a deliverance from all their real concerns and distresses and difficulties, all seems to have been solved.

And they attach the great importance of those wonderful deliverance to that moment when they felt able to lay themselves down at the feet of Jesus and say, Lord, not my will, thy will be done.

[23 : 26] Now, what a wonderful thing that is. I sat down under his shadow. And then another thing she says this, with great delight, she tells us now what her experience was in so doing, with great delight.

the Proverbs, the eighth chapter, tells us how the blessed bridegroom delights, where he delights, what he delights in, and in that wonderful passage we read where he says, my delights are with the sons of men.

His delights are with his people. He came from heaven to earth because he delighted in them.

He delights in them now, seated in the heavenly glory. He delights to see his own people walking in fellowship with him and walking in the light, as John says, if we have fellowship with him, we are in the light, we walk in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

You see, there's so much that can go wrong at times in a believer's experience and power, life, and these things can be so easily put right by close observance of the principles of a real activity of faith.

[25 : 25] And where, she says, I sat down under his shadow with great delight, not with a little delight, but with great delight.

Yes, and that delight was very real. It was a delight in the Lord, and there can be no delight like that, in the Lord, delighting in him, delighting in his person, in his wonderful and wonderful love and his grace.

kindness, oh, that you and I might more and more delight in the Lord. If we were reading tonight, 58th of Isaiah, where the Lord exhorts his people so plainly as to the course of their conduct, if he observed my Sabbath as it ought to be observed, not doing thine own pleasure on my holy day, or seeking thine own way or thy own will in these things, then, he says, thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and the Lord will delight in thee.

so you may depend upon it if you've ever felt in your heart some measure of real delight in the Lord, the Lord has been delighting in thee.

He's found pleasure in thee, poor soul, though you may have seen very little ground for any pleasure at all. He's delighted in it, because like this blessed bride, you've sat down under his shadow with great delight, and then she comes to this point, and this is the vital transcending point in our text, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

[27 : 49] You see, she comes now right to the very heart of things, she's now speaking of what she has tasted, not just where she has been, what her posture has been, she's now speaking of what she has tasted, experienced.

To taste a thing is a very close thing indeed to us bodily and physically. and it's a very wonderful thing when you come to think of it, that God has provided us with as creatures, a taste.

A man said to me not very long ago, you know, he said, Mr. Collier, I've got sight, I'm thankful for it, I've got good hearing, and I'm thankful for that, and I can speak, I'm not dumb, but he says there's one thing that I haven't got that other people have, and that is a taste.

Everything is the same, whatever it be, sweet or bitter, it's the same to me without any differentiation whatsoever.

And I thought, well, what a pitiful place or condition to be in, because if there's anything that we do love, it's a taste of something sweet, or something savoury.

[29 : 27] Why, our lives are virtually made up of these things, our natural lives. and how great a defense taste is to us as creatures, because, you know, we might take things into our mouth if we had no taste, that we're instantly recognized, or would be recognized with a taste of being obnoxious or poisonous, but God has given us a taste, and as soon as we get the first taste of that thing, we get rejected.

We know it to be instinctively dangerous to take in to our bones. And then how helpful a taste is. And my mother, I always remember, and I've often told you this before, she made a cake for a very special occasion.

I think it was my birthday, cake, and she thought this cake was going to be so good. And it was all cooked and prepared, but when it was cut, it was awful.

And what had happened, she had taken a jar, thinking that it was something, sugar I think, possibly, that it was sore.

And oh dear, that cake couldn't be eaten. And she said this, if only I had tasted it, I should have known. But all was a disaster, because there hadn't been that taste.

[31 : 14] Now, turning these things to spiritual channels, what a wonderful thing it is to taste of Christ. That's a very real experience, and a very precious experience, to be able to say, I tasted it of him.

His fruit was sweet to my taste. Everything that Christ has produced by his grace is precious fruit to his people.

The trees of everlasting life, they are wonderful fruits. And every believer tastes these fruits, to the reviving of their own hearts and minds, to the joy of their souls.

His fruit was sweet to my taste. All the worldmen can go out after the world and has no better taste than the things of time perishing as they are.

But the real believer can only be satisfied with Christ. They want, once they have tasted him and his love and his fruits, they want no other kind of taste.

[32 : 38] They are ruined forever for tasting of the world's pleasures. And the only thing now that they can really enjoy and delight in is to taste of the Lord, his fruit, his sweet to my taste.

We could go on and speak of the fruits of the Lord, his word, his love, his atoning love, the precious fruits of his death, the things that have been brought forth by him, and all the wonders and the virtues and the blessings that he brings for his people.

These are fruits. But can you and I say this? They are sweet to my taste.

You may be able to say, I know they are sweet to the taste of so-and-so, but are they sweet to you? That's the all-important question.

You have to answer that question before God. But all that we might come into the experience of this dear beloved bride, when she said, as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sun, I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

[34 : 27] May God bless that. For Christ's sake. God er other years ago and him almost would hear this