

A SACRAMENT SERMON.

While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.—CANT. i. 12.

THIS chapter is a sweet dialogue between Christ and the church, wherein they interchangeably express their mutual love to each other. To reflect upon the context would detain me too long from the words. In such scriptures every word is a sacrament and every line a mystery. The Jews compare the three books of Solomon to the three parts of the temple which he built; they liken the Proverbs to the porch, Ecclesiastes to the holy place, and the Book of Canticles to the *sanctum sanctorum*, the holy of holies within the veil, where all things were full of mystery, reverence, and religion. Every expression in this book needeth distinct explication; therefore let it suffice to note, that when Christ had in the 10th and 11th verses professed his love to the church, and what he would do for her, the church, by way of thankful return, expresseth her love to Christ again, and promiseth here a lively exercise of grace in all acts of special communion with him—*While the king sitteth at his table, &c.*

In this profession of the church's respect to Christ you may observe—

1. The season or occasion—*When the king sitteth at his table.*
2. The effect or event—*My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*

In the first observe—(1.) The person; (2.) His act or posture. [1.] For the person, 'While the king,' that is, Christ, who in this whole song is set forth as a king: ver. 4, 'The king brought me into his chambers;' partly to answer the type, Solomon, and partly to show that all acts of communion on Christ's part are not only social and festival, but regal, such as would become a king, and flowed from his kingly office. And therefore, when we would have special communion with Christ, we must look upon him as a king. Partly to beget reverence. When they offered him a sickly lamb, the Lord pleadeth his dignity: 'I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts,' Mal. i. 14; implying that they did disparage his royal majesty in the baseness of his worship and service. Partly that we may admire his love and

condescension to us, he that is so excellent, the King of kings, of such sovereign majesty, that he will be so familiar with poor believers, and sit at the table with them, and feast them with his loves: Mat. iii. 11, 'But he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;' and Mat. viii. 8, 'And the centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.' And partly to enlarge our confidence; we may expect nothing but what is royal, largesses becoming the dignity of a king: Mat. xxii. 2, 'The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.' Christ will show himself a king in the ordinances of the gospel; in the new covenant he giveth himself to us, and with himself the benefits of pardon and life.

[2.] The gesture and posture wherein he is represented, 'Sitteth at his table.' Some render the word, *in corona sua*, while the king is in his ring and crown; the Septuagint, *ἐν τῇ ἀνακλίσει αὐτοῦ*, in his sitting down, a phrase usually put *pro discumbentium cœtu*, for a company sitting down to meat; their gesture was leaning, their form was in a round or ring; therefore we translate it, 'Sitteth at his table;' and Ainsworth, to express the import of the Hebrew word **בְּכִסֵּבּוֹ**, 'Sitteth at his round table.'

But what is meant, then, by Christ's sitting at his table? Some apply it to his abode in heaven, in the midst of the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; and the eternal pleasures they enjoy there are often set forth by a feast. But rather it implieth the fellowship we have with Christ by the gospel, which is also set forth by a table ready furnished and prepared, where Christ is present feasting with us; as Mat. xxii. 1-3, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king, that made a marriage for his son;' and Prov. ix. 2, 'Wisdom hath killed her beasts, and mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table;' and Isa. xxv. 6, 'And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.' More particularly, the Lord's supper is called the table of the Lord: 1 Cor. x. 21, 'Ye cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and the table of devils.' Well then, we see here—

(1.) That Christ hath prepared and furnished a table for the entertainment of his family: Ps. xxiii. 5, 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.' Devils malign, but cannot infringe our comforts; they grieve to see the riches of his bounty to us, but we are invited freely to partake of them.

(2.) He hath not only a table, but he sitteth down, cometh and suppleth with us: Rev. iii. 20, 'I will sup with him, and he with me.' The king is in the round or ring among the rest of the guests. At the first institution, Christ did himself partake of his own supper; then he was present in person, but still in spirit, and doth but wait the time when he will 'drink new wine with you in his Father's kingdom.' Mat. xxvi. 29, 'That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom,' Luke xxii. 30. For the present, the effect of an ordinance dependeth upon that sweet company and communion that we have with him in these duties. All gospel ordinances are the sweeter because of Christ's presence with them; this doth enliven the soul, when

Christ is at the table and sitteth amongst us. Thus we see in what posture Christ is represented.

Secondly, 'The effect of this on the church's part, 'My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.' It is usual in scripture to represent sin by roots of bitterness, and the fruits and graces of the Spirit by sweet spices and plants. Now, among all these plants, spikenard was of chiefest account. The herb lavender, which is pseudo-nard, or bastard spikenard, is sweet; but the true spikenard was of great price and esteem. The oil thereof they were wont to pour on the chief guests at great entertainments; as Mark xiv. 3, 'As Jesus sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she break the box, and poured it on his head.' Now afterwards it is said, 'It might have been sold for more than three hundred pence,' ver. 5. The Roman penny was about sevenpence halfpenny, and so maketh near ten pounds. And it is said, John xii. 3, that 'the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.' Now hereby are figured the graces of the Spirit, wherein Christ delighteth. Only let us inquire whether this be to be applied to the church passively or actively? Some take it passively, as if it were that liquid nard wherewith Christ anointeth the church; for 'we have an unction from the Holy One.' Junius renders it, *perfunder odoribus suavissimus*; but rather it is to be understood actively, that pure and liquid nard wherewith she anointed Christ. This costly and honourable entertainment was bestowed on the chief guest; and the church speaketh of her respect to Christ; she entertaineth him with the sweet favour of her good ointments when Christ sitteth at his table.

Doct. That in acts of special communion with Christ, grace cannot lie hid, but will breathe out with great fragraney; or, at the table of the Lord our graces should be specially and in a most lively manner exercised.

1. There is a reverence common to all worship, for 'God will be sanctified in all that draw nigh unto him,' Lev. x. 3.

2. There is a special delight and affection which should accompany every act of communion with God: for 'it is good for us to draw nigh unto him,' Ps. lxxiii. 28; and God saith, Isa. lvi. 7, 'I will bring them to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer.'

3. Besides, in all acts of communion with God there is an interchange of donatives and duties. Where we expect to receive much grace, there it must be much exercised and acted: Mark iv. 24, 'With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.' It is but equity that we should entertain Christ with our best, that we should break our box of spikenard whenever he vouchsafeth to come among us. All communion must needs be mutual, and consists in acts of grace from Christ to us, and acts of love from us to Christ. As you would delight in Christ, and be refreshed with the favour of his good ointments, so you must carry it so that Christ may delight in you; your spikenard must send forth the smell thereof.

4. Again, Christ may more sensibly manifest himself in one duty than another, for he is not tied to means, or to time and season; and it is his presence that maketh an ordinance comfortable, and doth revive the exercise of grace. As upon the approach of the sun in the spring

all is lively and fresh, so the heart is quickened by his drawing nigh unto us. Now sometimes he hideth himself in a more solemn duty, and manifests himself in a more common one, where we least expect him; as the spouse that fell asleep at a feast, Cant. v. 1, 2, was roused and awakened in meditation.

5. One duty must not be set against another. They are all instituted by God, and accompanied with his blessing, and are means of our communion with him, yet they all have their special use and tendency, and one is to be preferred in this respect, another in that, as the ends are for which they are appointed; as in the word we come to Christ as our teacher, in prayer as our advocate, in baptism as our head and lord, into whose mystical body we are planted; in the Lord's supper as the master of the feast, or our royal entertainer.

6. Though the Lord's supper be a special means, yet it is the spirit of grace which doth stir up faith, hope, and love in us. There are three things which must not be forgotten—

[1.] The duty is a means accommodated and fitted to this end, or God would never have instituted it.

[2.] The Spirit is the author both of grace and the exercise of grace; he first infuseth, and then quickeneth and stirreth up grace in us by this means: John vi. 63, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.'

[3.] You must stir up your own hearts: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee;' 2 Tim. i. 6, 'That thou stir up the gift of God that is in thee.' Well, then, allowing all this, yet it is a truth that at the Lord's table graces should be exercised in a special lively manner; which will appear if we consider—

(1.) The general use which sacraments have besides and beyond other duties.

(2.) What is the special use and intent of this duty.

(3.) What graces are to be exercised.

First, What a sacrament hath beyond other duties. It is the most mysterious instrument of our sanctification and preservation in a state of grace, and therefore requireth a special exercise of grace.

1. In a sacrament there is a more sensible assurance. In other duties we see God's goodness or readiness to do us good, in this his solicitousness and anxious care for our good: Heb. vi. 17, 18, 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of salvation the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' He is cautious to make all sure. *Nudum pactum*, a naked promise, is not so great an argument of God's love to us as a covenant signed and sealed.

2. A closer application. A general invitation is not so much as an express injunction. We have the universal proposal in the word, the particular application in the sacraments: Acts ii. 38, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'

3. A solemn investiture, or taking possession by certain instituted

rites. As we are put in possession by certain formalities of law, as of a house by the delivery of a key, or of a field by the delivery of a turf, This is my house, this is my field; so we take possession of Christ and all his benefits, 'This is my body.'

4. A visible representation of the mysteries of godliness; and so it doth excite us to the more serious consideration of them when they are transmitted to the soul not by the ears only, but by the eyes: Gal. iii. 1, 'Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you.'

5. An express means of union and communion with Christ. We draw nigh to God in prayer, and God draweth nigh to us in the word; but here is not only an approximation, but a communion: 1 Cor. x. 16, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' There is no union like that of food, which becometh a part of our substance; we eat his flesh, we drink his blood, that which is mystically so.

6. It is God's feast, where we come to eat and drink at his table as those that are in friendship with him. Some duties are our work, others our ordinary meal, but this is our feast: Ps. xxii. 26, 'The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your hearts shall live for ever.' Therefore we should specially rejoice in God our Saviour when we are admitted into his banqueting-house.

7. This is the sum of all other duties and privileges, *epitome evangelii*, the abridgment of christian religion, the land of promise in a map: Luke xxii. 20, 'This cup in the new testament in my blood.' The whole new testament comprised in one ordinance, pardon sealed, heaven anticipated, word and prayer mingled together; therefore should grace in a special and lively manner be exercised.

Secondly, What is the special use and intent of this duty? It was instituted for the remembrance of Christ: 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25, 'And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me: and after the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me;' and ver. 26, it is an announcing or showing forth the Lord's death till he come. We show it forth before God and men, as the ground of our thankfulness and confidence; and our great duty is 'to discern the Lord's body,' ver. 29; that is, to look upon it as a body offered in sacrifice for the reconciliation of the world to God, and to behave ourselves accordingly; so that our great work is to commemorate the mystery of redemption by Christ, with all the consequent benefits thereof. Now in this mystery there is considerable—

1. The occasion and necessity of it, why Christ should be given for us, our guilt, and misery, which could only be expiated by the blood of the Son of God; so that one great work of the sacrament is the representation of the evil of sin; for we are to remember the Son of God, 'Who was made sin for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21, and who was 'made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13.

2. The cause of it; the great love of God, or his mercy to poor sinners: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And the great love of the Redeemer, who willingly came to perform this act of bounty, to give his life for his people: Gal. ii. 20, 'Who loved us, and gave himself for us.' Therefore that which was set forth and commended to our thoughts is the infinite love of God in Christ.

3. The act of redemption itself; his 'obedience to the death of the cross,' Phil. ii. 7; or his 'making his soul an offering for sin,' Isa. liii. 10. Therefore he is represented as 'crucified before your eyes,' Gal. iii. 1.

4. The consequent benefits which thence result to us. You come not to receive the mercy of an hour, but here is pardon of sin given us without any infringing the honour of God's justice, Rom. iii. 25, 26; the favour of God, 2 Cor. v. 19; the spirit of grace, Titus iii. 5, 6, Gal. iii. 14, and 1 Cor. x. 4, compared with John iv. 14, and vii. 37. So also eternal life, or hopes of glory, Titus iii. 7, and Rom. v. 1, 2, and 1 John iv. 9. And indeed this whole duty is a figure of the eternal banquet. Now the king sits at his table, and his people round about him; hereafter they shall sit about the throne, and the Lamb in the midst of them, and then 'he shall drink *καὶνὸν*, new wine with them in his Father's kingdom,' Mat. xxvi. 29. And the discerning his body now is a pledge of seeing his face then. Now these blessings are great, and therefore should raise our wonder; most needful, and therefore should quicken our thankfulness; most firm and sure, for they are dearly purchased, freely offered, surely sealed. The covenant of grace, by which they are conveyed to us, was founded in his blood, offered to us in the promises of the gospel, and sealed in this duty: Mat. xxvi. 28, 'For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.' Now it being thus dearly purchased, most freely promised, and solemnly applied, externally by eating this bread and drinking this cup, internally by the Holy Ghost sanctifying the action to such a purpose, we should be more revived and encouraged in waiting upon God.

Thirdly, What graces are to be exercised, which is as it were the pouring out of our box of precious spikenard on Christ's head or feet.

1. With respect to the necessity of our redemption, a humble sense of the odiousness of sin, represented to us in the bruises and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ when he came to be a sacrifice for sin, that we may loath it, condemn it, resolve no more to have to do with it: Rom. viii. 3, 'By sin he condemned sin in the flesh;' that is, by the sufferings of Christ God showed an example of his wrath and displeasure against all our sinful indulgences to the flesh. Therefore Christ crucified must be a sin-killing spectacle. And when we behold Christ crucified, our old man must be crucified with him: Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him;' and Gal. ii. 20, 'I am crucified with Christ.' The bitterness of his agonies and passions must make sin hateful to us.

2. The love of God in Christ, which was the cause, must beget a

fervent love to him again, that we may love him who hath loved us at so dear a rate: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them.' There must be a willingness and resignation to deny ourselves, and all that is dear to us in the world, rather than prove unfaithful to Christ, who suffered such great things for our redemption. This love must kill and mortify our sinful self-love, which is so great a bane and mischief to us, and the cause of all our miscarriages.

3. The act of redemption, or the death of Christ, must breed in us a lively faith in Christ, that we may accept him as our Redeemer and Saviour upon his own terms, and trust ourselves into his hands, and devote ourselves to his service, crying out, as Thomas, 'My Lord and my God,' John xx. 28; welcoming him into our souls with the dearest embraces of thankfulness and hearty affection.

4. With respect to the consequent benefits, there must be—

[1.] Earnest desire, 'called hungering and thirsting after righteousness,' Mat. v. 6; after communion with God in Christ, that you may be partakers both of his renewing and reconciling grace, and that you may get more sensible proof of his love to your souls.

[2.] Joy in the sense of the greatness, suitableness, and firmness of the mercy represented, offered, and applied to you: Cant. i. 4, 'We will be glad and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy loves more than wine;' Acts viii. 39, 'And he went on his way rejoicing.'

[3.] Hope, which is a desirous expectation of the promised glory, looking and longing for it with more earnestness and confidence. This antepast in the house of our pilgrimage is sweet, but what will be our communion with him in heaven? The house of God is the gate of heaven; Christ's death is the price given for your life: Rom. v. 10, 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.'

5. That love which is here commemorated must be imitated, and leave a suitable impression upon you. If Christ gave his life for those who are sometimes called his enemies, sometimes his people, such an impartial charity must you have to all men. To brethren and neighbours: 1 John iv. 11, 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;' that is, this love must be answered in our imitating it towards our brethren. And to enemies: Eph. iv. 32, 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' Our wrongs are greater and more in number. But especially must our love be greater to souls, that we may do anything for the saving of souls. This must be regarded, for we have not a due sense of any excellency till we adopt it into our manners, till it be the very constitution of our hearts and our constant practice. Imitation is a greater respect than commendation.

Use 1. Information.

1. That in right celebration of the Lord's supper, all the work is not the minister's; it should be a busy day with every christian, as becometh the guests of the God of heaven at so sweet a feast. Christ instituted this duty, and blesseth it; the minister, as his steward, dis-

penseth it, but you must receive it ; and receive it with an applicative faith, with the holy arduours of love, with heavenly desires and resolutions of thankful obedience, loathing sin, renewing covenant with God. You have these graces from Christ, as Esther had sweet odours out of the king's treasury, Esther ii. 12. They are stirred up by the Spirit, but they must be acted by you, and then Christ is pleased and refreshed.

2. To show how unfit they are for the Lord's supper who have no grace at all. Here God requireth the fragrancy of grace ; how can they send forth a sweet-smelling savour who have no spikenard. When they come to break their box, it is empty ; they have not gotten this precious ointment. How can they be lively who are not so much as living ? Who would expect a flame from a dead coal ? Can it glow before it be kindled ? Here we are to quicken and draw forth the grace that we have. This is no duty for them who are dead in their sins. What should a dead man do with a cordial ? and men that have no life, with food. No ; there must be a stock of grace, a good treasure, before we can bring it forth. In vain do men seek after quickening when they have no life.

3. How unsuitable and sad it is that we are most dead where we should be most raised, fresh, and vigorous ! At any time dead service doth ill become a living God. The heathens saw that the worship must be proportioned to the object of worship. When they worshipped the sun, they offered a horse, and Josiah destroyed the horses of the sun, 2 Kings xxiii. 11. Surely whatever is tendered to God should have the stamp of God upon it. But now in this duty special life and rejoicing in God is required of us ; here we have to do with the bread of life : John vi. 35, 'I am the bread of life ;' and the water of life ; and shall we be conversant about these things with a dead heart ? All should be life and vigour here. What may be the causes of this deadness ?

[1.] Slowness of heart and averseness from all spiritual duties. Our heart naturally bendeth downwards, and sin doth beset us as a weight : Heb. xii. 1, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us.' This cloggeth us in all our heavenly flights and motions. In the best the heart hath a wing and a weight ; it would fain mount up to God, but the flesh depresseth us.

[2.] A particular cause is customariness. We come carelessly, with common hearts, as to a common work. Custom goeth no further than the external act, or conformity to the common practice : 'They sit before thee as my people,' Ezek. xxxiii. 31. They do not consider what is required, but perform what is used, and are guided by others' practice rather than their own conscience and the nature of the duty ; and then no lively exercise of grace is to be expected from them.

[3.] Some carnal distemper. When you give contentment to the flesh, you draw on a hardness and deadness upon the heart, and then in all acts of communion with God there is no life in you : Ps. cxix. 37, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way.' An inordinate liberty in worldly and fleshly delights quencheth the vigour of grace, and obstructs the lively exercise of it ; as the prophet saith, 'They take away the heart,' Hosea iv. 11. This is a superadded burden and clog to the spirit.

[4.] Confidence in their own good estate, without actual preparation, or raising their desires and affections. They think, with Samson, to go forth and shake themselves as at other times; but their strength is gone, their mind is barren and vain, their will remiss, their affections dead and cold. There needeth continual diligence to keep the heart in a right frame, and serious preparation before solemn duties.

[5.] The confusion of a dark and ignorant mind: 'What went you out for to see?' Mat. xi. 8. They have a devout aim in general, but do not consider the particular end and use of the duties they are conversant about, nor their own wants, and what suiteth most with their case, either the work of faith or repentance; and then what life can you expect in them?

Use 2. To press you to stir up your graces, and break open the box of precious ointment, that the whole house may be filled with the savour of it. If you want Christ, let your souls make hard pursuit after him. If you have found him whom your souls love, rejoice in the light of his countenance. But whether you exercise desire or delight most, let both endear Christ, that he may be more precious to you, and you may engage yourselves to great fidelity to him, resolving to live for the future in all love and obedience to him. Consider again and again what sin deserved, what Christ hath suffered, how wonderfully God's love is expressed, and what thankful obedience is required of us. More particularly—

1. Humble yourselves before God, as unworthy to approach his presence. The saints never loath themselves so much as in the highest acts of communion with God: Job xlii. 5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The soul is never in such a humble posture as when it hath the most raised thoughts of God; then the most holy become vile and loathsome in their own eyes. So Isa. vi. 5, 'Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.' Great is our unworthiness to appear in the presence of so glorious a majesty; yet this should not make us run away from God, which is an act of legal bondage, but humbly and penitently to run to him, which is an act of faith and dependence on Christ. We are unworthy, but we must not refuse God's remedy, but sue it out in a broken-hearted manner.

2. Admire the wisdom and love of God in finding out such a remedy and ransom for our souls. It deserveth to be the wonder of all men and angels. The angels stand by, and wonder at what God hath done for us: 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels;' and 1 Peter i. 12, 'Which things the angels desire to look into:' and Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' The angels were but spectators, not the parties interested, but yet they pry into this mystery. Oh! how deeply should our hearts be affected with it.

3. I commend to you the look of faith. Look upon Christ as crucified for you: 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced,'

Zech. xii. 10; and as 'bearing your sins in his body on the tree,' 1 Peter ii. 24. This is the sight which is exposed to the view of your faith. When Pilate had scourged Jesus, he brought him forth to the Jews, saying, 'Behold the man,' John xix. 5. Or as John pointed as with the finger to Christ: John i. 29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.'

4. Heartily receive Christ, that he may live in you, and you in him: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;' and Col. ii. 6, 'As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' Receive him with joy and thankfulness, as the greatest gift that ever could be given you, with a hearty consent of subjection to him.

5. Give up yourselves to Christ as his redeemed ones: 2 Cor. viii. 5, 'But first gave their own selves to the Lord;' and Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;' and Ps. cxix. 94, 'I am thine, save me.' Give up yourselves to Christ, to be justified, sanctified, saved by him. Our very taking Christ requireth this giving ourselves to him, for we take him as our Lord and Saviour.

How shall we do to be thus lively in the exercise of grace in this duty?

[1.] Beg the assistance of the Holy Spirit. When God's wind ariseth upon the gardens, the spices flow out: Cant. iv. 16, 'Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out;' that is, in sweet and refreshing odours. We should provide fresh thoughts, but they will be dead and cold unless the Spirit come in with new and fresh influences. The habits of grace lie asleep till he doth actuate and quicken them. The censers of the sanctuary need not only to be filled with incense, but to be set afire, before the perfumed smoke can ascend to heaven in clouds and pillars: Cant. iii. 6, 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant?' When the heart is inflamed and love kindled, then do we send out a sweet savour.

[2.] Seriously prepare yourselves. Look not for sudden rapt motions when you use not God's means to get your hearts into this frame. There is a watching unto prayer, and a serious examining before receiving. The general preparation is the holy life, for one duty prepareth for another; they that are led by the Spirit will pray by the Spirit. But there is a special preparation, like trimming our lamps when we go to meet with the bridegroom.

[3.] You must rouse up yourselves, and call upon all that is within you to do its office: Ps. ciii. 1, 2, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' A man hath some power to awaken his own soul, and stir up himself to heed the work that he is about. You may speak to your hearts; we must do what we can as reasonable creatures.

[4.] When we have done all, all must be perfumed with the sweet incense of Christ's intercession: Rev. viii. 3, 'And another angel came

and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.' Alas! we mingle weeds with our flowers, and sulphur with our incense; and our duties, as they come from us, are very unsavoury, and stink in the nostrils of God; not like the odoriferous smell of a precious ointment.
