

the front of all the other graces, as being the entrance into a religious temper, the beginning of the divine life in the heart, the first step of the poor sinful creature in its return to God in Christ.

Secondly—labouring and heavy laden sinners are particularly distinguished here, because otherwise persons in such a situation, hopeless of relief in themselves and from creatures, might be in great danger of excluding themselves from the offer of mercy. If there was only a general call to come to the Lord Jesus, the poor, humble, convicted soul, pressed down with a sense of its guilt, filth and depravity, might be ready to object thus: "O Sir, surely it cannot be worthless, hell-deserving creatures as I be to whom our Lord Jesus directs his kind invitation." Therefore it is that he who "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," doth kindly encourage them by this special address; that the very thing which to themselves would appear the greatest obstacle in the way of mercy, might become the means of assuring them, that they are the very persons for whom mercy is prepared. Let this then, encourage every weary, self-condemned sinner. The greater your guilt and filth appear in your own eyes, the greater reason you have to think that the mercy of our Lord Jesus hath even reached you, and touched your heart. Mercy—man, woman—looks for no inheritance of righteousness, no gratification as the impulsive cause or moving reason of its exercise on thee, but a sense of its absolute need. Mercy reaches freely to thee through the Lord Jesus, without money—without price. Christ shews mercy to thee through his promise and invitation, for his veracity and faithfulness are engaged therein. If not, then, O, if, Sir, my burdens were of a lesser weight, I might entertain hope of my deliverance from them at last; know thou for certain that no burden is too heavy for omnipotence; for he who is mighty to save, can easily remove this most oppressive load; "his word cleanseth from all sin;" and "by him all who believe are justified from all things,"—This great and non-such physician came to heal some slight distempers, but to cure those inveterate diseases which none else could cure. Whatever then,—man, woman, whatever disease hath been, or is even now, it shall reproach neither skill nor power; and all he calls for at your hand is a submission of mind to use the means he prescribes with an unshaken reliance and dependence on him as the life of mercy; from whom they flow, and to whom they lead. If, then, you are truly convinced that your sin is so great and your corruptions so strong, that none in heaven or on earth can save you from them, but the Lord Jesus alone; if you are groaning under the burden of your innumerable sins, and find no peace, no comfort, no rest, till pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace bring peace, pardon, joy and comfort into your poor distressed soul, then you are in the very position which our text describes, and we may warrantably say to you in the Lord's name—*as Martha said to Mary, "Arise quickly, the Master is come and he calleth for thee;"* and this is his call, "Come unto me."

This leads me to the second thing I proposed to state and explain, which was *the invitation itself, and what was intended by coming to the Lord Jesus*. Now, for the clear understanding of this, it will be improper, I presume, to remind you of the different characters which our blessed Lord and Master sustains; or in other words