

A Father's Expostulation and Enquiry

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"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" Hosea 6:4

I know not any part of Scripture more difficult to understand than the book of Hosea. It is difficult to understand it literally; and it is more difficult, if possible, to understand it experimentally. It is difficult, literally, because we know so little of the historical circumstances of Ephraim (or Israel), under which these prophecies were delivered; and it is difficult to understand it spiritually and experimentally, because the different traits of Ephraim's character are so scattered up and down this book, that it is very hard to bring them together so as to form out of them a complete description. And yet a few words upon the literal meaning of the book may be preparatory to entering into the experimental meaning of it.

Under what historical circumstances, then, were the prophecies of Hosea written? They were addressed, for the most part, to Israel; that is, to the ten tribes who separated under Jeroboam from Judah, and who, a short time after Hosea's prophecy, were carried into captivity by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. It was therefore to the ten tribes known under the name of Ephraim (that being the most important tribe of them all), that Hosea, a short period previous to their captivity, delivered these prophecies.

But when we look at the spiritual meaning of the book, we find a deeper signification in it than any mere literal address to the ten tribes. We see in it a character, a spiritual character, set forth and described under the name of

Ephraim; and who and what this spiritual character is, we may make the subject of some enquiry.

One thing, at first sight, I think is evident, that a child of God is set forth under the name of Ephraim: for the promises are so great and glorious, that none but a living soul can be addressed in them; and yet a child of God under peculiar circumstances and in a peculiar state.

Let us endeavour, then, to gather up a few of the traits of Ephraim's character.

1. The grand distinguishing feature of Ephraim seems to be this, *that he was "a backslider."* We read, for instance, "Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer;" (4:16) and we find the Lord addressing to him a promise in that state, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." (14:4.)

2. This backsliding of Ephraim was the real root of all his other sad evils; we find therefore, that he was also *an idolater.* "Ephraim is joined to idols." (4:17.) Idolatry is the source of backsliding. No sooner do we depart from the "Fountain of living waters," than we "hew out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water;" no sooner do we run in our desires after idols than backsliding begins; and when backsliding begins, rapid is the progress that it makes.

3. Another feature of Ephraim's character traced out in this book, was, that he was *mixed up with the world.* "Ephraim hath mixed himself among the people." (7:8.) He had become entangled in the world, had forsaken the company of God's people, and got into close connection with those who feared not the Lord. Thus his heart had become hardened, and his conscience deadened; and he was as "a cake not turned." What a striking figure is this! It was not all dough,

so as to be moulded by the divine hand; it was not all bread, so as to be good food; but it was burnt on one side, and dough on the other; neither fit for God nor man; neither suited to the world, or the church. "Strangers" too, we are told, "have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not." (7:9.) There was, if we may use the expression, a secret drain upon his constitution; he had got so entangled in the world and so buried in the things of time and sense, that these strangers, as a disease in his vitals, had "devoured all his strength." "Grey hairs" too, were "here and there upon him." He had lost the vigour of youth, and the wrinkles of age were seen spreading themselves over him, and yet "he knew it not."

Now these traits, and I might, if time allowed, notice others, show that the distinguishing feature of Ephraim's character was, that *he was a backslider*. Like many of the Lord's people, his heart had become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What little feeling he had was momentary and transient, like "the morning cloud and early dew." So that all God's providences and all God's judgments had little effect upon him. And therefore, in the words of the text, the Lord says to him, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?"

Here the Lord takes the language of a tender father. A parent, perhaps, has a very wayward child: say, a son, grown up, who will follow his own ways, and over whom the parent has lost his original control. To regain his authority, he treats him with the greatest kindness, but that does not succeed; next he tries harsh measures, and these have no effect; sometimes he is distant, but that does not alter his course; sometimes friendly, but that does not change his conduct. And though, at times, the son may have some workings in his heart towards his father, "like the early cloud

and morning dew," and has transient determinations not to go on in his wayward and rebellious course: yet kindness and severity equally fail. The father, therefore, sometimes says, "What shall I do with him? What shall I do to him? Whatever course I take, whatever means I employ, all are alike fruitless; he is just the same wayward creature, and all that I do does not seem in the least to mend him."

Now, in that sense, we may say, the words of the text are words of *expostulation*, as if reasoning with Ephraim, arguing the matter over, putting the case before him, and saying, "What plan next shall I adopt! What is the next course I shall pursue!"

But there is another meaning of the word, which I think I may take without violently straining it from its original signification, and that is, *an enquiry*: "*What shall I do unto thee?*" "Tell me what it shall be, and I will do it."

If we look, then, at the question, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" *first*, as an *expostulation*; and *next*, as an *enquiry*, if God the Spirit shall throw a light upon it, and bring it with power to our heart, it may be for our edification to consider the text in these two points of view.

I.—*First*, then, by *way of expostulation*. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" Now, the Lord does not ask this question as though he were ignorant what course to take, for he knew perfectly well all that he meant to do. But he expostulates as a man might reason with his neighbour; for this is the way in which God sometimes speaks. He condescends to take into his lips the language of man. As we find him speaking of his arm, or his hand, or his ear, parts that only belong to the human body; so here he adopts a language of a man, as though he were in doubt, "O Ephraim,

what shall I do unto thee?"

But alas, when we get into a backsliding state, (and O! who does not get into a backsliding state, I should like to know?) it seems as though nothing that the Lord said could move us. Perhaps, we have heavy afflictions; but these do not bring us nearer to him; they only stir up rebellion, make us peevish and fretful, and increase our natural perverseness. As we read, (Isaiah 57:17), "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Like a sulky child, the more the parent strikes, the more sullen it is; the parent may break the rod on the child's back before he breaks the child's heart. And so God in his providence may break us to pieces by afflictions, but not break our hearts into contrition and godly sorrow. So on the other hand, the Lord may show us great kindness temporally, may shower down upon us providential favours, give us our natural heart's desire, and prosper every plan. But these favours will not bring us out of our backsliding state, wean us from idolatry, or make us say, "What have I any more to do with idols!" Thus, whether the storm of adversity blows, or the sun of providence shines, the backslider still goes on in the frowardness of his own heart, and the perverseness of his own way.

II.—But we may take the words of the text in a *way of enquiry*; and to that meaning I shall chiefly confine myself. It is as though the Lord had said, "Come to me, come to my throne; tell me, tell me, all that is in thine heart; tell me, tell me, all that thy soul wants to have accomplished; tell me, tell me, all the desires that heave and ferment in thy bosom." "O Ephraim, *what* shall I do unto thee?"

When the base backslider gets a little softened (and the Lord does soften him sometimes, as we read, "I will be as the dew

unto Israel," Hosea 14:5); when the dew falls into the backslider's heart, it softens, melts, and breaks him down; for when the Lord heals his backslidings, it is sure to break his heart all to pieces. When, then, he calls up Ephraim before him, and says, "What shall I do unto thee?" what a long list of petitions does Ephraim then bring. For now that he can get the King's ear, he pours out his petition before the King's throne. Having the privilege of pouring out all his soul and telling out all his desires, what a list, what a catalogue of petitions is he enabled to spread before his divine Majesty. And is it not sweet to have some access unto the Lord in prayer? If you know anything of access to God, you have felt the secret of vital godliness in your soul. Is it not, then, sweet to enter the throne-room, and be admitted into the very presence of the King? There are times and seasons when we can open our hearts before the Lord, and tell him every desire and want that heave and ferment in our minds. They are indeed very rare seasons, but very sweet and blessed when granted. And if ever the Lord give us a heart to plead, he has an ear to hear; and if ever he give us access to himself, he will grant every petition we are enabled, under the teachings of his Spirit, to spread before his throne.

Let us, then, take the words in a *way of enquiry*: "O Ephraim, what is it thy heart longs after? Tell me, and it shall be granted?" We will go, then, with the poor backslider to the throne; and with him, we will, if the Lord enable us, simply, humbly, and sincerely tell the Lord what we want him to do with and for us.

1. *Pardon of sin by the healing of his backslidings* is one of the things Ephraim would ask of the Lord, if he gave him an open mouth before his throne; for the Lord has said, "I will pardon them whom I reserve." (Jer. 50:20.) Ephraim, therefore, says (Hosea 14:2), "Take away all iniquity, and

receive us graciously." Now when we feel what we are and have been; when we have a solemn feeling in our conscience what base wretches, what vile rebels, what filthy monsters we are and how polluted with everything black and horrible from day to day, and hour to hour; and when we feel shining upon us the purity and holiness of God's nature, how we long to have the manifested healing of all these sins sealed upon the conscience. And if the Lord does but speak into the heart, and say, "What shall I do unto thee? what is it thy soul most earnestly desires?" the answer would be, "That my backslidings may be healed, that my sins may be forgiven, that my aggravated crimes may be blotted out, that my transgressions may be cast behind thy back, and that my soul may be washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." And as the soul is enabled to spread this petition before the throne, the pardon is in a measure given. No sooner does the soul ask in faith, than it receives in faith; and the power to plead in faith brings down the gracious manifested answer. How strikingly was this the case with Isaiah (6:5-7) and Daniel (9:20-23). Thus, the Lord says, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," says the Lord: make thy petition deep and large. "Ask it either in the depth, or the height above" (Isaiah 7:11); and tell me what thou wantest?

Now, my friends, take this as a piece of counsel. I speak it not in a legal way; I trust I know something spiritually and experimentally of what I am saying. When the Lord favours your soul with sweet access at a throne of grace, make the most of it. What should we think of the master of a vessel coming up the river, if, when the wind was favourable and the tide served, he would not heave her anchor, or hoisted but her fore-sail to the breeze, and would not take full advantage of wind and tide? Now it is so sometimes with our souls; a gale blows, a gale of grace on the soul, and the tide

of faith rises. Is it not our wisdom, and is it not our mercy, at such a rare season, to make the most of it? If the Lord deign to give us an ear, is it not our mercy to tell him all that our souls desire? Do you recollect what the Prophet said to the king who only struck his arrows three times on the ground, and then stayed? "The man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." (2 Kings 13:19.) Had he continued to strike his arrows on the ground, so many more victories would have been obtained; the prophet therefore was angry with him because he stayed his hand.

Sometimes it is so with us. When the Lord gives us some little access unto himself, we do not make the most of it. Satan casts in some fiery dart, some worldly circumstance distracts our mind, some filthy imagination rises up in our bosom; and instead of resisting the devil that he may flee from us, we give way to him; the opportunity is gone, the sweet moment is lost, and it may be months before we get the ear of the King again. It will, therefore, be your wisdom and your mercy, when the gale blows, and the tide rises, to spread every sail, and to get as far as you can on your course to the haven of eternal rest and joy.

2. But again; when the Lord says to the soul, "What shall I do unto thee?" would not the petition be, "*Lord, that thou wouldest manifest thyself unto me; that thou wouldest reveal thy glorious Person, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and dying love in my heart?*" When the soul has known something of the love of Jesus, does it not want the veil to be removed, that it may without interruption behold the Object whom it loves? He that has seen anything of the beauty, preciousness, and glory of the Lamb of God, does he not

want nearer and dearer, sweeter and more frequent communications and revelations, of his gracious and blessed Majesty? And if the soul be privileged and enabled to come before his throne, and the Lord should say, "What shall I do unto thee?" "Tell me what thy heart most earnestly desires;" will there not be some filial breathings to the Lord, that he would manifest himself to us as he doth not unto the world? Would not the language be, "O that I might have such a sweet discovery of thy glorious Person, and such a blessed manifestation of thy dying love, as shall give me union and communion with thy glorious Self, and bless me now and for ever?" Sure am I, if the soul gets the King's ear, it will want to see the King in his beauty; sure am I, if ever the soul is indulged with access to Jesus, it will say, "Lord, do discover thyself to me, that I may see thee in all thy beauty and all thy loveliness."

3. But the King is not tired with listening; his almighty ear is not weary of the many petitions presented at such times. He still says, "What shall I do unto thee?" If, then, we get the King's ear, we shall feel ourselves under the Spirit's inward leadings, teachings, and guidings; and we shall have a great many wants, and a long list of petitions to spread at his feet. One will be, *that he would make our conscience tender in his fear*. Where the conscience is tender, we shall fear to offend him, shall want to please him, shall desire to walk in his footsteps, to be conformed to his image, and long to have his likeness stamped upon us; we shall want to abstain from all that he hates, and cleave to that which he loves. And when he brings us near to himself, and says, "What shall I do unto thee?" "Make my conscience tender," answers the soul; "let my heart be softened and meekened;" let the fear of the Lord be in perpetual exercise; let me see the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness; let me perceive the snares that Satan is spreading for my feet, and let me, through thy mercy and

thy grace, avoid them; let me never do anything to displease thee; and let my walk, conduct, and conversation be consistent, and such as is well-pleasing in thy sight." Sure I am, if the Lord only say, "What shall I do unto thee?" and we feel that he is able and willing to do what our souls need, to have a conscience made tender in his fear, will be one of the first and foremost requests. Was not this the prayer of Jabez? And God has seen fit to write it down for our instruction. "O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and *that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me?*" (1 Chron. 4:10.) And was not this one of the petitions which God heard and granted?

4. But again. If the Lord say to the soul, "What shall I do unto thee?" It would answer, "*Lord give me communion with thyself;* let me know what it is to walk with thee and talk with thee, as a man talketh and walketh with his friend; let my soul mount up into holy fellowship with thee, and know what it is to have sweet and heavenly communion with the King of kings." What intercourse is to be compared with this? We go into the world; and what does intercourse with the world do for us? It defiles our conscience, hardens our heart, pollutes our minds, and fills us with everything sensual and carnal. We go among professors; and what does intercourse with them do for us. It either puffs us up with pride and presumption, or sends us away dead and barren. We go sometimes among the children of God; and have we not found lightness and frivolity too often in them? (I will not say always, for sometimes we get light and life, power, strength, and consolation from the people of God.) But what do we frequently get? Perhaps, from some dear friend we get wounds, have our minds pained, or imbibe carnality and death. But what do we get from the Lord, if ever we are enabled to commune with him? Some conformity to his

image; some power from his presence; some communication of light and life from him in whom light and life eternally dwell. And if your soul knows anything of being brought out of the world, as the Lord says, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee" (Isaiah 26:20); if you know anything of going into the chambers, and closing the doors about you; if you know anything, in solemn moments, of breathing your souls out before the Lord; you will feel, that five minutes' communion with the Lord of life and glory is more profitable and sweet, than an hour's intercourse with the most holy and highly favoured of his people.

5. But again; for we have not yet exhausted our list of petitions: if the Lord says, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" We shall reply, "*Lord, break every snare my soul is entangled with*; deliver me from every temptation that catches and entangles my roving feet; remove every idol that interposes between thyself and my soul; take away insincerity, hypocrisy, and superstition; purge and cleanse me from self-righteousness, and from the hateful dominion of every idol." And the Lord will not be angry with us, if we ask him to do these things in us and for us. He himself first implants the desires which he means to answer; he first kindles the prayer that he means to grant; and therefore he is not angry with us for asking him to do those things that he means to bestow; he loves to hear the cry of the humble before his throne. And as the Lord brings us into some measure of union and communion with himself, he dethrones these idols, breaks these snares, overcomes these temptations, makes us honest and sincere before him, and purges out that wretched hypocrisy of which our hearts are full to overflowing.

6. Again. If the Lord says, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto

thee?" another petition will be, *"That I may be the clay, and thou the Potter;* and that I may feelingly and experimentally be the work of thy hands; that I may know thy will, and do it; that I may be moulded into a measure of conformity to thy likeness; that I may feel thy gracious fingers working in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure; and find and feel myself a vessel of mercy made meet for the Master's use. When a man is brought here, it is the death of pride in him; free-will gives up the ghost, when human exertion utterly fails, and the soul lies helpless and powerless before the Lord. And until free-will, self-righteousness, creature exertions, and human merit are dried up and withered away, till they all give up the ghost, we can never come into that spot where we are the clay, and God is the Potter. Can the clay make itself into a vessel? Can it mould itself into shape and form? Can it start from its bed, and work itself up into a vessel for use or ornament? Nor more can we make ourselves fit for glory, or mould ourselves into vessels of honour. If the Lord do but give us the feeling in our souls, our sweetest privilege, our dearest enjoyment, is to be the clay. Free-will, self-righteousness, human wisdom, and creature strength—we give them all to the Pharisees; let them make the most of them. But when the Lord indulges our souls with some measure of access to himself, and brings us in all humility and brokenness to lie low before his throne, we feel that we are nothing but what he makes us, have nothing but what he gives us, experience nothing but what he works in us, and do nothing but what he does in and for us. To be here, and to lie here, is to be the clay; and to find the Lord working in us holy desires, fervent breathings, secret cries, and the actings of faith, hope, and love; and to feel these things freely given, graciously communicated, and divinely wrought, and to know the Lord is doing all this for us and in us, is to find him the Potter, and is to be brought to the sweetest, lowliest, and happiest spot that a soul can

come into.

There may be some here, perhaps, who think they shall get to heaven by creature piety, native holiness, human exertion, and natural wisdom. I solemnly tell you, that you will find it all a blank and an awful deception; and believe me such a way of getting to heaven is nothing else but a delusion of the Devil, and the spawn of our own self-righteous hearts. We have no natural power, no creature wisdom in the things of God; for we are and have nothing but as God gives and spiritually works it in us. Nor will the knowledge and experience of man's misery and of God's mercy lead a man to sin; but it will make him heavenly-minded, dead to the world, full of love to God and to God's people, to which the creature with all its exertions never could possibly attain.

7. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee!" Most of the Lord's people have some peculiar thing that they want to have granted. Most living souls have some peculiar temptation from which they want to be delivered. If some of the Lord's people could sum up all their desires in one petition, it would be to *have the pardon of their sins sealed upon the conscience*. If others of God's people could crowd up in one sentence all the wants of their soul, it would be *to be brought into the enjoyment of gospel liberty*. If others could condense in one short prayer the chief desire of their heart, it would be *to be delivered from some powerful temptation, or be preserved from some peculiar besetment*. And if others could get into one request the longings that heave in their bosom, it would be *to be relieved from some special trial or trouble* that at times seems as though it would weigh them down to the dust. When the Lord, then, does but enable them to come before him, and tell him what is working in their hearts, it is as though he said, "Be not afraid to tell me; I know it already; I have the power to grant thy request; I have the will to bestow the desired answer. 'What shall I do

unto thee?' Tell me what it is?" The Lord encourages and enables every one that he thus draws near to himself to tell him what he most needs; and when he is enabled to lay them before his throne, it is half answered. The needed blessing is on its way; like Gabriel, it has left the palace, and is speeding its course to the soul.

But in what path must we travel before we can tell the Lord what our soul chiefly desires to have granted? Before we can come here, we must see an end of all perfection; we must be brought off from depending on or looking to creature righteousness; our strength must have become weakness, our wisdom folly, our knowledge ignorance; all we once proudly thought we were must have faded away, and become like a vision of the night. We must sink down into the ruins of the creature, before we rise up feelingly and spiritually in Jesus; we must come to the end of all creature religion, creature exertions, creature refuge, creature help, before in godly sincerity and spiritual simplicity we can come before the Lord, and ask him to work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Now this is the main reason why so few of us know what it is to have manifest answers to our prayers. How we go on, many of us, year after year, praying and desiring, and do not get a clear answer! Why is this? Because these prayers and desires are half-hearted. They are like Ephraim's cake; they want turning; they do not come from the heart. Our fleshly religion has not been thoroughly broken, turned upside down, brought to confusion, reduced to beggary and thorough insolvency. How we read, "When they had nothing to pay," (O what a qualification!) "he frankly forgave them both." Now too many of God's people are like the servant in the gospel, who said to his master, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Most of God's people try at first to make some composition with their great Creditor; as a man sinking in the world, sooner than be

a bankrupt, will compound with his creditors for five shillings in the pound. But as long as we have a penny in the pound to pay, the whole debt remains against us. As Hart says,

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."

But many of God's people who have not been brought to this spot are afraid to come here. How many a sinking tradesman dare not look into his accounts! He will borrow money at immense interest, give bills, or do anything to shore up his sinking credit: but at last, down he comes with tenfold more ruin to himself and others than though he had broke at the first. Some of God's people are like this sinking tradesman; they will shore up their rotten credit by borrowing good opinions from others; will make vows, promises, and resolutions, and use every exertion and attempt to avoid beggary. But, sooner or later, the bills come back on them; they are all dishonoured; God will not accept them; and down they go, where they should have gone at first, into thorough ruin, complete beggary, and utter insolvency. And when they are brought here, there is a full acquittance; the debt is paid; and when the Lord brings his dying love into their consciences, they get full discharge. As in nature, so in grace; to have nothing and to be nothing but a beggar and a pauper, how it lowers the topsails of human pride! To have nothing in self to rest and hang upon, leaves but a step between hell and the soul. To pull down everything in self is to take away the wall that keeps us from falling down the precipice. But the truth is, that till self is dethroned, till creature righteousness, creature piety, creature exertions, and creature strength are brought to nought, we do not enter into the power, blessedness, and reality of Christ's kingdom;

we are not fit guests to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We cannot enter into the treasures of pardoning love, see the riches of atoning blood, and feel the glory and beauty of justifying righteousness, till that idol, religious self, is hurled from its pedestal. Whilst full of pride and self, we cannot follow Jesus into the garden of Gethsemane, nor see, by the eye of faith, the suffering, groaning, agonizing, bleeding Son of God; we cannot take our station at the foot of the cross, and behold the wondrous mystery of Immanuel, the God-Man, bleeding and dying there. While we are engaged in looking at our own pharisaic religion, our own piety, our own exertions, our own doings, we have no eyes to see Jesus, no ear to hear his voice. We are so enamoured with ourselves that the King of kings has no beauty in our eyes; he is to us as "a root out of a dry ground, and there is no form nor comeliness in him that we should desire him." But when we begin to see, shall I say, the ugliness, the depravity, the dreadful workings of self, we see how impossible it is that self can ever stand before God. And when we feel the ruin of self, then we begin to feel what a glorious salvation has been accomplished, according to the counsel and mind of God. We see the Lord of life and glory stooping down to save wretches who could never climb up to him, pardoning criminals that have no righteousness of their own, and opening up the treasures of his dying love and risen glory to those who without him must utterly perish. As this is revealed to faith, faith embraces it as the great "mystery of godliness;" hope casts out her anchor, and enters within the veil; and love flows out to Jesus, and embraces him in the arms of affection for such dying love as that which the Son of God manifested on the cross of Calvary. Now this experience puts the sinner in his right place; it debases him in his feelings, humbles him in his soul, and breaks him to nothing. And at the same time, it exalts the Lord Jesus in his affections, and he becomes manifestly

in his conscience as his "all in all." So that he lives for nothing else but so live unto him, and he dies for nothing else except to be with him; and he thus feels the power of that Scripture, "whether we live we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom. 14:8.)

Just suffer me, then, by way of summing up and bringing these things into a narrow compass, to lay down these two broad lines of truth; and may the Lord in his mercy seal them upon our consciences. There are two grand lessons to be learnt in the school of Christ, and all divine teaching is comprehended and summed up in them. One is to learn by the Spirit's teaching, what we are by nature; so as to see and feel the utter ruin and thorough wreck of self, and the complete beggary, weakness, and helplessness of the creature in the things of God. This is the first grand branch of divine teaching. And we have to learn this lesson day by day, "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Through this branch of divine teaching we have almost daily to wade, and sometimes to sink into very painful depths under a sense of our depraved nature. And the other grand branch of divine teaching is, "To know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." To know *who* Jesus is, and to know *what* he is; to know the efficacy of his atoning blood to purge the guilty conscience; the power of his justifying righteousness to acquit and absolve from all sin; the mystery of his dying love to break down the hardness of our heart, and raise up a measure of love towards him; and to see, by the eye of faith, his holy walk and suffering image, so as to be in some measure conformed to him, and have his likeness in some measure stamped upon our souls.

By these two branches of divine teaching does the Spirit make and keep the children of God humble. And all our

various providences, trials, temptations, and deliverances; all we pass through in nature, and all we pass through in grace; in a word, the whole course of circumstances by which the child of God finds himself surrounded, all tend to lead him into these two paths—either into a deeper knowledge of himself, or a deeper knowledge of Christ; and under some form or other to humble him, and exalt the Lord of life and glory; thus eventually causing "all things to work together for the good" of his soul, and every event in providence and every dealing in grace to terminate in God's eternal glory. To this point all the dealings of the Spirit tend, and in this channel all the teachings of the Spirit run. And every teaching (or what we think is teaching) and every experience (or what we think is experience), that does not run in this channel, and does not tend to this point—to abase us, and to bring us down to the dust; and at the same time exalt the Lord of life and glory, and put the crown on his blessed head—all experience, or fancied experience (for there is a great deal of fancied experience in the church) that does not run in this channel, or tend to this point, does not spring from the teachings of God the Spirit in the heart; for his covenant office is, to take of the things of Christ, and make them known to the soul, so as to exalt and glorify Jesus. Thus all his dealings, leadings, guidings, and teachings are for this purpose, and to this end; and will eventually terminate in the consolation and salvation of all the redeemed, and to Jehovah's glory, who, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is worthy of all adoration, honour, power, praise, thanksgiving, and glory, both now and for ever.