BIBLE SUBJECTS

FOR THE

HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.

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"YE ARE NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOW-CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS, AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD." Eph. ii. 19.

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LUKE XII. 35, 36.

LUKE XII. 35, 36.

Is the thought of the Lord's nearness welcome, or ungrateful to the soul? Is the expectation of being with Him, without notice, or delay, pleasant to the heart?

The true practical walk of a believer gives a right answer to these enquiries. "Let your moderation be known unto all men,-the Lord is at hand." "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the Judge standeth before the door." Moderation, or holy restraint in the use of present things, and gracious, liberal consideration of others, here approved as among the right ways of a saint, are such as would stand the light of the Lord, if he were at the moment to appear. Are our ways, then, such as suit the thought of his nearness, and would abide the light of his presence? Have they, or have they not this voice in them, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Could vanity, could uncleanness, could the desire of gain, could the lust of distinction? Has the haughty look that voice in it? Has carnal levity, or spiritual sloth? We know that these cannot desire the day of the Lord, for it is to them "a day of darkness, and not of light." Our behaviour should be such as would introduce us to His presence without disturbance; for he comes, not to regulate, but to gladden us,-not to put us in a right path, but to close a right path in glory.

J. G. B.

A SHORT MEDITATION

ON THE

MORAL GLORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

(Continued from p. 10.)

The life of Jesus was the bright shining of a candle. It was such a lamp in the house of God as needed no golden tongs or snuff-dishes. It was ordered before the Lord continually, burning as from pure beaten oil. It was making manifest all that was around, exposing and reproving; but it ever held its own place uncondemned.

Whether challenged by disciples or by adversaries, as the Lord was again and again, there is never an excusing of himself. On one occasion disciples complain, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" But he does not think of vindicating the sleep out of which this challenge awakes him. On another occasion they object to him, "The multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But he does not recall this inquiry, but acts upon the satisfaction of it. At another time Martha says to him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But he does not excuse his not having been there, nor his delaying for two days in the place where he was; but instructs Martha in the wondrous character which his delay had given to that hour.

What a glorious vindication of his delay that was! And thus it was on every like occasion; whether challenged or rebuked, there is never the recalling of a word, nor the retracing of a step. Every tongue that rises in judgment against him, he condemns. The mother rebukes him in Luke ii.; but instead of making good her charge, she has to listen to him

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THE POWER OF GODLINESS.

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"For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power." 1 Cor. iv. 20.

THE form of godliness is very common in these days of ours; but the power of it is very rare. How few persons shall we find in Christendom who live and act in the strength of God! Generally, men do whatever they do in their own strength; and that not only in human things, but in divine. How seldom do we see in Christians, in the discharge of their several duties, more than the power of men; the greatest part by far, not only of those who are called Christians, but also of forward professors, being ignorant of what it is to be strengthened with might in the inner man. How little is there, among all our plenty, of that preaching which is not in the plausible words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power ! How few congregations among the many that are in this kingdom are gathered together in the spirit and power of our Lord Jesus Christ! How few of those Christians are there, in whom is the exceeding greatness of God's power, together with the effectual working of it! But the form of *adliness* is now become almost the covering of all flesh; and in these days of light and knowledge, it is accounted by all that are not downright Atheists, a great shame not "to seem to be religious." And when men, and families, and congregations, are gotten into this *form*, they think themselves both safe and happy, as being near the suburbs of the kingdom of God, and close neighbours to the saints. And this form of godliness, as it is of very easy compliance with flesh and blood in this particular, in that according to this men only make their actions new, retaining still their old natures, so it is also of great credit and esteem with carnal preachers. "But he

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that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man;" and he, being partaker of the power of God himself, can in some measure discern both the presence and the want of it in others, both which he knows in his own experience.

Now this *form of godliness* is, when men appear godly without God, and anointed without Christ, and regenerate, not having the Spirit; that is, when they have a semblance of holiness, but not the thing itself—a semblance of grace, retaining their old natures.

And such Christians as these perform spiritual duties with natural strength; heavenly duties with earthly strength; the works of God with the power of men. In the religion of these men there is the outward duty done, and it may be very speciously and plausibly; but there is none of Christ nor the Spirit in the duty. There is their own working towards God, which is faint and faithless; but not God's own working in them towards himself, which is lively and mighty. And all the religious acts they do are only their own operations, and not the operations of God in them. (John iii. 6; Rom. viii. 8.)

This form of godliness, how pleasing soever it be to a man's self, and of what reckoning soever with others who are like himself, yet is indeed of very evil and woeful consequence, whether we regard the doings or the sufferings unto which this form necessarily engages.

For first when men, by occasion of this form, are called forth to do the great works of God, and yet are destitute of the power of God, their duties are above their strength, and their strength bears no proportion to their duties. And so, sooner or later, meeting with difficulties, they faint and languish as a snail, their work being too high for their faculties; for nature, being strained above its power, by degrees grows weary, and returns to its old temper again, and he who sought that glory which was not his own, at last lies down in his own shame.

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Again, the form of godliness exposes a man to those evils that are incident to the faithful because of godliness. Now, when a man hath the same evils with the faithful, and not the same power to support him under those evils; when men have the same evils in the flesh, but not the same power in the spirit; the same burdens on their shoulders, but not the same Everlasting Arms underneath them, they fall sadly and desperately, to the great scandal of the ways of God. (Matt. xiii. 20, 21.)

However, if men be not called forth to such eminent doings and sufferings, and so escape such manifest discoveries and downfalls, yet the form of godliness hath this evil in it, that it brings a man only to the troublesome part of religion, but not to the comfortable; it engages a man with the same duties with the godly, but supplies him not with the same strength; it involves him in the same bitterness of flesh, but doth not furnish him with the same joy of spirit. For as such a man's religion doth not reach above flesh and blood, no more doth his strength and comforts. And so he performs duties at a low rate; yea, and his bare and empty form casts a black vail upon religion, and utterly obscures its beauty and glory, and makes the world judge meanly of it, and to think it a matter only of singularity and humour, and not of "power;" whereas, when a Christian walks in the strength of the Spirit, doing and suffering the will of God beyond all strength and abilities of flesh and blood, the world oftentimes gazes at him, and many are provoked to "glorify God, who hath given such power to men."

W. DELL, A.D. 1645.

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PRIESTHOOD AND THE LAW CHANGED.

Нев. vii. 12.

AMONG the various aspects in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us, it is well oftentimes to distinguish between that which he is properly in his own Person, and that which he is as constituted of God.

It is most legitimate to trace him from the manger of Bethlehem, to his coming in the clouds of heaven in fully manifested glory. The Holy Spirit delights in this theme—in tracing the lowly rod of the stem of Jesse, growing up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, to the stately BRANCH in manifested beauty. (Isa. xi. 1; liii. 2; Jer. xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12; Luke i. 78.) So, again, it is now the special office of the Holy Ghost to glorify Jesus by testifying to us what he is, and is owned to be in heaven, whilst he is rejected on earth. In the reception of this testimony is found the great strength of the Church in its militant state here in the world.

But there is something before all this. There is the tracing him down from heaven to earth, as well as tracing him up from earth to heaven, to return thence in manifested glory. It is this character of testimony to Jesus which the Holy Ghost presents to us in the commencement of the epistle to the Hebrews. It is true that the prominent subject is the official dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle, Captain, and High Priest of our profession, —elevated far beyond Moses, or Aaron, or Joshua. But this elevation, whilst true of him officially, is far more true by reason of the essential dignity of his own person. God hath in these last days spoken to us by the SON. This is not an official title, it is his

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