

atmosphere round about them is always cold, and heavy, and chilling, and misty. No birds of Paradise flash and sing about them, no beautiful flowers enamel and perfume their footsteps, no shining ones talk with them, no sunbeams play about them; the city of gold, and pearls, and precious stones never glimmers in the distance; on the contrary, the turrets of Doubting Castle loom through the mist, and its gloomy portcullis grates on the ear as every now and then Giant Despair walks in and out. The pilgrims that travel in this unhappy territory are gloomy and anxious. They wander about, and they scarcely know whether they are going forward or backward, heavenward or earthward.

Evidently Christian joy cannot live in such an atmosphere as this. The cold shivering mists of doubt suffocate it in a moment. Christian joy means a consciousness of sin forgiven, an inward peace and satisfaction arising from reconciliation with God—it means fellowship with Jesus and a good hope of heaven. O ye Christian doubters! joy cannot be yours until you get into a sunnier and more flowery region.

2. The prevalence of *feeble experience* may be assigned as another reason. A condition not so much one of doubt, as one of infancy. Religion lives in Christians of this class, but it only *just lives*. Faith and hope, and love and joy are there, but that is all. They may be seen as the light of the glow worm, but not felt as the light of the sun. Religion lives on sufferance. It is a subordinate, not a controlling principle. Christ is in the lowest room, the world in the highest and best.

3. Christian joy is not unfrequently stunted in its growth by a *defective theology*. Some good people are almost as much afraid of joy as they are of sin. They think that darkness is much more profitable to the soul than light. That the work of God in the heart is much more surely carried on during a state of inward suffering. That anguish, and pain, and distress are far more beneficial to the soul than joy. Christians are said to be in far greater peril in a season of religious enjoyment, than in a time of general barrenness; and they illustrate their doctrine with the prudential remark, that the Tempter suffers a vessel with a worthless cargo to pass unnoticed, but that he bears down on a richly-freighted prize ship. "O," say they most monitorially, "take care of your joys; you are safe enough in your sorrows. Cloudy weather is the surest sailing for the Christian."

We have for some time had the conviction that a man's intelligence is the measure of his experience, that the measure of his religious enjoyment is determined by his belief, and that the level of the one will, in all ordinary cases, be that of the other. He whose views of the Spirit's witness are confused, will have on the same vital point a confusion of experience; and he who looks upon Christian joy as a dangerous thing, will not be overstocked with that precious fruit of the Spirit.

But where do the Scriptures represent Christian joy as a dangerous emotion? No where. On the contrary, it is the subject of unvarying eulogy and command. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and,"—— What? Cloud and shadow? No. "Joy in the Holy Ghost." "The joy of the Lord