

again. We may fancy that we hear them saying one to another, "Does Paul mean exactly what he says; does he mean that we are to rejoice when our enemies imprison us and spoil our goods, when affliction fills our flesh with pain and our families with fear, when we are beset with temptation and struggling with fiery trial, when cold and iron death diminishes the circle that lies the warmest to our hearts—does he mean that we are to rejoice then?" "I would," says one, "that I could always rejoice, when the road is smooth and the sky clear, to say nothing about doing so when the one is rough and the other stormy." "I would," says another, "that I could rejoice half my time, to say nothing about rejoicing evermore." "Upon the whole," says another, "I have begun to think that a quiet sorrowfulness of spirit is the best and safest for me; my rejoicing moments, which are very seldom, are always the forerunners of something unpleasant." "Most likely," interposes another, "Paul has given us a mark to aim at, more than a rule to walk by. Rejoice evermore, indeed! I wonder who does it."

Are we wrong in supposing that these Thessalonian and Philippian weak and feeble ones have their counterparts at the present day? Are we wrong in supposing that there are some now living who have as little real sympathy with the Apostolic injunction as we have fancied these primitive professors to possess? We fear that we are not wrong. We would that we were. We have the impression that there are some whose rejoicing moments are like angels' visits, "few and far between;" and others who regard unbroken joy, neither as a rule to walk by, nor a mark to aim at.

And yet nothing in the Bible is more evident than the duty and privilege of rejoicing "evermore." Unusual as it may be, and difficult of attainment as it may seem, yet there it is. The divine and majestic trees of faith, and love, and hope, are not more palpable in the fruitage of the spirit, than the beautifully attractive one of Christian joy. Love itself does not possess a more odorous foliage, a richer produce, or a more perennial freshness than does the slighted tree of abiding joy in the Holy Ghost.

Not long ago we ran over most of the passages in the Bible in which Christian joy is either enforced or embodied, and the surprise was great at their number and significance. "Blessed" or happy "are the people that know the joyful sound." "Oil of joy for mourning, garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy." "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy," &c. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and so on through the long drawn aisles of the Divinely inspired Cathedral, did these bells of music ring their joyous and holy changes, and the wonder was that we had never heard them so distinctly before.

*What then may we suppose to be the reason why Christian joy is not more generally felt?*

1. Unquestionably one reason is *a doubtful experience*. Some professors of religion live in a region of perpetual uncertainty. If there is a tract of country between the city of Destruction and the city of the New Jerusalem, a very contrast to the land of Beulah, that is where they sojourn. The