

NOT VERY GOOD;
and
NOT VERY BAD;
or,
The Middling Man

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MAN

“FROM what you have said, John, it seems you think yourself a pretty fair kind of man.”

“Well, Mr. F——, I will tell you my opinion about that exactly. I don't think I ever did much that was bad; nor can I say that I ever did a great deal of good. I think you may call me a *middling man*.”

“That is your opinion, John? But don't you think that everything that exists must have had a cause from which it sprung?”

“Certainly I do, Mr. F——, for old John is not so void of sense as not to know *that*.”

“Well, John, what do you suppose causes a man to be good?”

“God, of course, sir.”

“And what do you think causes a man to be bad?”

“The devil, most certainly; for God never made anything bad.”

“But, John, what is the cause of a *middleing* man?”

“W-e-ll, I sup *r-o-s-e*——”

“John, I perceive you have got fast there. You say God is the cause of a good man, and Satan the cause of a bad man, but you say that *you are neither!*—You are *middleing*. Doubtless, John, you must have had a *cause* that made you what you are. But is there is no middle Being between God and Satan, and only the two revealed causes of *good* and *evil* in man, then I am at an exceedingly great loss to know what has been the great moral cause that made you *middleing*?”

“Why, sir, I have heard a great many folks like me saying that they were *middleing*, that is, neither good nor bad; but really, when I think of the matter in the way you put it, I begin to be somewhat doubtful whether I am right. Yet, I assure you, sir, I do not think I should be called a bad old man.”

“John, did you ever see a middling gold dollar? Or did you ever see a middling bank-note?”

“No, never, Mr. F—; they are always either good or bad. But I have known some bad ones to pass for good ones.”

“Well, John, if you never saw middling money, you never saw middling men; that is, as before God. God is a Being of perfect holiness—infinite purity, and He judges according to a perfect standard. To be accepted of Him, we must be perfectly fitted for His approval. He cannot adopt *middling* men and call them *good*. You must either be righteous or unrighteous—either saint or sinner. A ‘*middling*’ man has no existence in God’s sight. So, friend John, I want you to think seriously on this matter; ‘you cannot serve two masters.’ At this moment you are either serving God or Satan. You cannot be a middling man. You can have no middling cause, no middling life, no middling death, and no middling *destiny*!”

Reader! as I have said to John, so I say to you. You are at this moment either *good* or

bad—righteous or *unrighteous*—in God's sight. You cannot be middling. You are either a child of God or a servant of the wicked one; you are pardoned or unpardoned; you are either a subject of God's grace, or you are under His condemnation. If you consider this whole subject aright, as an inevitable conclusion, you will be brought to say, that while you read this, you are either fit for heaven or fit for hell. If righteous, you will go where the righteous are; if unrighteous, you will go where the wicked are. There is no middling Being; therefore there can be no middle place for that which does not exist.

But how can you become righteous? That is the great question.

There are only two ways by which you can be made righteous so as to be accepted of God.

One is, to satisfy God for all the sins you have committed against Him, as well as for the evil nature which gave them birth.

The other is, to find a *substitute* to do this in your stead.

Now, by the first of these ways, you know in your heart that for you, righteousness in

the sight of God is impossible. But by the second, the great end can be obtained. For God, not willing that we should perish, has appointed just such a substitute, in the person of His own Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) Jesus came to die in the stead of the sinner—to bear not only the curse which the law has pronounced upon the sinner because of his sins, but also the judgment on his evil nature. And now, through His atoning death, "all that believe are justified from all things" (John iii. 36; Acts xiii. 39.). So, if you believe in Christ really as your Substitute and your Saviour, "you are," at this moment, "*complete in Him,*" and "*accepted in Him,*" and in Him as guiltless before God as if you had never sinned; you are, properly speaking, accepted as righteous through *believing in Christ*. Whoever, then, believes in the atoning death of Christ, gives Him the whole glory of his salvation, and puts aside every thought of his own works or pious doings as having any merit before God.

Reader, are you a believer, or an unbeliever? Are you saved, or unsaved? God's record is,—“He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life;” not, will have at some future time, when certain conditions have been fulfilled. If you say you believe on the Son, and yet do not believe you have everlasting life, then you dishonor this record (1 John v. 11.); and *if you do not truly believe in God's Word, how can you say that you truly believe in the value of Christ's blood?* Reader, you must be born again, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, or you will be eternally lost.

But if you believe in Christ as your Substitute, who bore the dreadful punishment of your sin, then *you are saved*. Now, do you believe this? If you do not, your faith is not the faith that the New Testament enjoins. But if you believe this, then rejoice in your present salvation, and let the blessedness which you enjoy appear unto all men, that God may be glorified by you.

By P. J. L.

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