

Last evening,

A YOUNG LADY FRIEND.

who is now very thoughtful about her soul's salvation, was invited by a friend to a social prayer-meeting. She had also been invited to a party. The party was not in itself a sinful place of entertainment, but her conscience said to her, the prayer-meeting is the safest place and the best place for me to night. She was more likely to meet Christ, to honour Christ, and to get needed help for her soul among His people, than among a merry company of pleasure-seekers. Her going to the house of prayer was a decisive act; it was a following after Christ, rather than after a worldly indulgence. Did she do that in order "to be saved from frivolous, soul-dissipating influence, and from reproach of conscience; she wanted to put herself distinctly on Christ's side, and she did it. Her step was like casting a ballot on election day; it showed which side she was on. The prayer-meeting could not convert her soul, but her act of going there was an evidence that she was being converted, for conversion signifies a turning round towards Christ.

We have cited the above case as an illustration of what is implied by "following" Christ. The same principle may be applied in a hundred different directions; every right step taken in obedience to the voice of an awakened conscience, is a step towards salvation. Christ speaks through the conscience: "Whosoever He saith unto you do it."

Very quietly the Holy Spirit often opens the heart, just as he did the heart of Lydia. What is done by that awakened heart commonly settles the great question. She opened her lips for Christ, and opened her house to His servants, and that proved that she had admitted Jesus into her heart. What she *did* saved her, because she did it in order to obey and honor her Divine Saviour. If she had done the opposite, who supposes that Lydia would have become the first convert on the soil of Europe; and have found her place among godly women? Her actions spoke louder than words.

"What makes our Fred so wonderfully kind and obliging this week?" enquired a wife of her husband. "I don't know, unless he was converted by that sermon last Sabbath." The husband was right; the youth had been quietly changed in heart by a faithful sermon, and began at once to *act differently*. That boy's conduct at home was his way of following Christ; his conversion proved itself by

his acts, and has *lasted* ever since. God's hand was in it.

Salvation is a joint process—it is all free grace on the side of the atoning Saviour; it is all free obedience on our side. Jesus works, and you must work; He in you, and you for Him. Doing nothing at all is the damning sin. Just observe what answers Peter and Paul gave to the questions "What must we do to be saved?" Peter's prompt, pithy answer at the time of Pentecost was "*Repent!*" Repentance is more than shame or sorrow for sin; it is a turning from sin with a full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience to Christ. This means doing, not mere feeling.

My friend A—repented of the sin of dram-drinking, when he signed a pledge and forsook his bottle. It would have been absurd for him to have said that he was penitent and trusting Christ, while he was yet taking sly drinks out of that decanter. It would in his case have been a quenching of the Holy Spirit. An awakened inquirer once said to me "My besetting sin is to swear." Then I replied "Confess your sin to God, and stop swearing. At whatever point the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, there is the point to yield and to repent. Repentance proves itself by acts."

Paul's answer to the question was "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." This was also an act, and a very impressive one. Trusting, in the jailor's case, was not a babe falling asleep on the bosom of a mother—as some goody good people define faith. It was a pretty resolute step into which he put the whole energies of his soul—as I would put all my bodily energies into grasping a rope if I fell overboard from a ferry-boat.

There are times in life when faith is a very quiet resting in the arms of the Redeemer. But I don't understand that the jailor was in the spiritual condition for that style of reposeful trust. His was the quick cleaving to Jesus; God was working in him, and he in turn was "working out his salvation with fear and trembling." My friend, your faith must be a laying hold on Jesus Christ, and a cleaving fast to Him. That is *your* doing. He will cleanse you, strengthen you, and hold you to the end. That is *His* doing.

Finally, the whole great question of your salvation must be settled between you and your Saviour. Go to Him. One hour with Jesus is worth years of sermons or enquiry-meetings. No pastor, no friend can save you; Jesus can. Whosoever He speaks to your conscience, do it.