

Gospel was directly opposite to that. Instead of his being a power between God and the sinner, we hold that his happiest work is to make the sinner feel that there is no power, visible or invisible, between him and the Saviour, and so to encourage him and lead him up direct to the One Mediator. He then put some question, which seemed to say, "What, then, is the apparatus of absolution?" This, he was told, was all settled by a few words of St. Paul. "The word is nigh you, even in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith we preach: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Here the whole apparatus is "nigh" the man, in his own person,—his heart to trust in the Saviour, his mouth to call upon Him, to confess Him; that is all the apparatus. Wherever a man stands feeling his need of salvation, there are all things now ready,—the loving Saviour, the free pardon, the blood that speaketh peace, the heart to believe, the mouth to call upon the Lord.

When the Roman heard this, he looked up and said, "How grand that is! why, that could be done in a quarter of an hour." Yes, it may be done in a quarter of an hour; for this salvation is a free gift. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you;" and then mark the deliberate and very forcible repetition! "for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh *it shall be opened.*"

Is this not free salvation?—*Rev. W. Arthur.*

#### THE FIFTY YEARS' COMMUNICANT; OR A FORMALIST'S DEATH-BED.

On a cold snowy winter's night some years ago, I accompanied a friend to visit an old woman in one of the closes that run off the High Street of Edinburgh. We ascended a long stair and found in a small room the old woman lying on her bed. No one could look on her features without seeing that death was very near.

From our friend we learned that she was full eighty years of age; that she had made a kind of profession of religion for fifty years; had been a member of one of the most privileged congregations in Edinburgh; but that, alas! there was no reason to believe she knew anything of religion but the mere empty form. She had enjoyed the faithful ministry of Dr. C. and Mr. M., and had regularly sat down at the communion table, and now her ordinances were all over for ever.

We went up to her bedside, and said, "So you are very ill—death is very near—the doctor says you cannot live above a few hours: what is your hope for eternity?"

"O," she said, "nobody can say a single word against me. I was a member of Dr. C.'s church in his time and afterwards for fifty years, 'a regular joined member.' I was never absent from the sacrament once that I can remember."

"If you are trusting for salvation to that," we said, "you are hiding in a refuge of lies, and death will sweep all your hope away."

"O, but," she said, "I was always a decent woman; nobody can say anything against me."

We quoted God's word, "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." But she began again about what she called her "privileges" for fifty years, and her soul seemed so hardened and blunted by her life-long form of godliness, that the arrows of God's word seemed to make no mark on her conscience.

Here was a solemn lesson to show what privileges unblest can do. They had not been without effect, but the effect was but to sear and harden. They seemed, alas, to have been but the savour of death unto death. We thought of the fifty years' Sabbaths, and communion Sabbaths, under the ministry of men of God who had been blessed to the conversion of many sinners, and the refreshing of many of Zion's children. All these precious means of grace had been no means of grace to this poor dying sinner. They had been but weaving together the rags of self-righteousness which she was now clasping around her so closely. And now her feet were soon to stumble on the dark mountain.