

work amid other scenes, comes the task of saying good bye to the dear old sheet with which writer and readers have for the past eleven years walked in company.

Thus with all of us each stage of life's work comes to an end. Thus that life's work hastens to its close. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

To the readers of the Maritime I will not say good bye. I hope to meet them all from month to month through the columns of the Record, and will do all that I can to make that meeting a pleasing and profitable one to them.

SERMON.

[To the readers of the MARITIME I have taken the liberty of giving, as a parting wish for them, the farewell words to my congregation.—Ed.]

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. 2 Cor. xiii: 14.

The text is Paul's parting greeting to the Corinthians, and what better could he give them. So well fitted is it to express in short compass the deepest, most fervent, longings of the believer for his brethren in Christ that it has come to be used as the parting word, the *benediction*, the good saying, by Christians in all ages.

There are two things of which I wish to speak in connection with it:—

I. *The thought underlying the text.*

Custom has associated with these words two different ideas. One is that of authority, as if he speaker should say, "I command upon you this good thing," "I pronounce upon you this good saying." This authoritative idea of blessing we find prevailing largely in the Old Testament. One striking illustration of it is the case of Isaac with his two sons. Jacob came, feigned himself the hairy hunter and his father blessed him with the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and the lordship over his brethren. When Esau came and the deception was known, the blessing could not be reversed. "I have blessed him," said the trembling patriarch, "yea, and he shall be blessed." And Esau cried with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, and then his father, though he cannot reverse the former word, grants him too a blessing. Then in after years, this Jacob, wiser and better grown,

blessed both the sons of Joseph, he too, as his father had done before him, giving the chief blessing to the younger instead of the elder son.

Many other instances occur in the Old Testament and there is no doubt that in New Testament times the same authoritative idea largely prevailed, and there was probably something of it in this parting greeting of Paul to the Corinthians.

I suppose there is a sense in which Paul as an Apostle had a right to pronounce the words with some measure of authority. And those who believe in visible apostolic succession believe that that right still exists, that the clergy, when regularly ordained according to their succession, have a right to pronounce authoritatively this benediction. And even in the Presbyterian Church in days not long gone, the same idea in some measure held sway, for it was not considered proper for a man to pronounce the benediction unless he was an ordained minister.

The other idea of the text and that which I wish to associate with it tonight, is that which makes it simply a parting prayer. As if the speaker should say, "I pray, that the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost may be with you." No magic formula of words that is to bring blessing no matter who may speak them. No talisman that receives its virtue from a channel constituted by the laying on of the hands of either Patriarch or Presbyter, but a simple parting prayer which I may offer for you and you for me. And though there may not attach to it the authority of command, it has an authority all its own, the authority of prevailing prayer, an authority based not upon ecclesiastical position but upon the faith and holiness of him who utters it, an authority which may be as great when coming from the lowliest toiler in the humblest sphere, as from a robed and mitred pontiff.

II. *What is contained in the text.*

1. There is the recognition of each of the persons of the God head according to his sphere of work in man's redemption. Change slightly the order of the clauses and take first that which refers to the Father. May "the love of God" be with you. The love of God is the great first cause in the plan of salvation. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Take next that which refers to the Son. May "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" be with you. Grace or favor is often spoken of in connection with Him. The Psalmist says of Him ages before His coming "Into thy lips is the store of grace