

certainly it can form no valid excuse for setting aside a plain law of Christ. How do you know that he is irritable? Have you tried him, and in the right spirit? If he is wrathful do you not know that a "soft answer" is heaven's antidote for that evil—it "turneth away wrath." Remember that "*if he will not hear thee,*" he is then a proper subject for further dealing, and it *may be discovered* that he is an improper subject for church fellowship.

2. Again, it has been said. "I am so insignificant a member of the Church that I would not be heard." No member of the house of Christ is so insignificant as to be offended by the most dignified or important member in it with impunity. But peradventure this same self-styled insignificant member does not consider himself or herself so insignificant as not to be able to convince those who will listen to his tale in secret. Some very insignificant insects do mighty damage to stately and beauteous plants. If you will not tell it to the offender, because you are insignificant, then for other and far more cogent reasons tell it to none. Sometimes we have known this objection to be worked out in a different direction. Individuals considering themselves offended have absented themselves from the Lord's Table; just as if the Law had run "*if thy brother offend against thee—then leave the Lord's table immediately.*" This course is not only a violation of christian charity, in as much as it is a turning the back upon the entire brotherhood as if they had unanimously countenanced the wrong, admitting it to be a taking of the last step first, only counting the whole Church instead of only one member, heathen men and publicans. But it is also making the violation of one law a reason or excuse for the violation of another: He who said "*This do in remembrance of me,*" said also "*Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.—I will not obey the first says the party offended, because I am unwilling to obey the second.*"

3. Once more; we have found it urged, "*but the matter between me and my brother is so trifling that it is not worth while to go this length with it.*" *Be it so.* We can easily believe that a vast number of offences are too trifling to be thus followed up; but then, first, if so, it is too trifling to be made a barrier to your enjoying peaceful and happy communion with your brother. If it interfere with this, it is not too trifling for the application of our rule. But if too trifling, then, second, it is too trifling to be made the subject of gossip and tattling. If so trifling then by all means let it drop.

We close this part of our exposition with one practical remark. Let us all beware of hearing complaints made against our brethren. We are seriously to blame if we hear an account of an offence, before the offender has himself been dealt with. Were we to ask, kindly, but decidedly, when about to be made a confidant in any supposed case of offence—*Have you been at the brother himself?* we should see fewer violations of this rule. Tale hearers encourage by listening to tale-bearers. Where the demand for an article decreases, the supply decreases proportionally. Now, were all of us steadily to refuse hearing tales to our brother's hurt, those who dealt in that article would soon get tired of their unwelcome trade. We injure our own peace of mind very much by tale hearing. We also help a brother to neglect a plain law of Christ, when we hear his tale