

separation from these, till at last two be not left to walk together. And for that other text mentioned, 2 Thess. iii. 6, where Paul exhorts the church of Thessalonica to withdraw themselves from every brother that walks disorderly; I cannot but wonder that any should bring this to justify their separation or withdrawal from the communion of a true (though a disorderly) church. For,

(1.) Consider, that this was not writ for a few members to withdraw from the church, but for the church to withdraw from disorderly members.

(2.) Consider, that if any offended members, upon pretence of error, either in doctrine or practice, should by this text become judges (as well as parties) of the grounds and lawfulness of their separation; then it will follow, that half a score notorious heretics, or scandalous livers (when they have walked so as they force the church are ready to deal with them, and withdraw from them), shall anticipate the church, and pretend somewhat against them, of which themselves must be judges, and so withdraw from the church, pretending either heresy or disorder; and so condemn the church, to prevent the disgrace of being condemned by the church. How needful then is it, that men of peaceable dispositions, and not of froward and fractious and dividing spirits, be chosen to rule the church of God, for fear lest the whole church be leavened and soured by them!

4. As there must be care used in choosing men to rule the church of God, so there must be a consideration had, that there are many things darkly laid down in scripture; this will temper our spirits, and make us live in peace and unity the more firmly in things in which we agree; this will help us to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ, inasmuch as all things necessary to salvation and church communion are plainly laid down in scripture. And where things are more darkly laid down, we should consider that God intended hereby to stir up our diligence, that thereby we might increase our knowledge, and not our divisions, for it may be said of all discoveries of truth