

evidence: "for in the mouth of two or three witnesses must every word be established." 2 Cor. xiii, 1.

2. The *aim* of the church must be, even in this final step, to *gain the offending brother*. "If he neglect to hear the church." This implies that the *church speak to him*. And this again implies that *time* be given—that patience and long-suffering be exercised. He must be dealt with. We are not at liberty to wish to get rid of him—perhaps saying—What loss will it be to us? There is another question more worthy of our consideration—What will *he* lose by being separated from us? Aye, and another still—What will Jesus lose by this brother's expulsion? The members must endeavor to put themselves in Jesus' place, and to realize that they, in their church capacity, are called upon to act for Christ, and as he would have done had he been on earth. See 1 Cor. v, 1-5, where the church in Corinth is called to act as with Christ in their midst and in His name. A christian church is not a monarchy, nor an oligarchy, nor a democracy, but a theocracy, and Jesus is the Theos.

But this reference introduces us to the final step. "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

3. He *must be solemnly separated* from the fellowship of the church by the voice of the whole community. If any refuse to accord with the church in this sentence—the facts of the case having been proved—they thus render themselves liable to be dealt with in the same manner; for he that countenanceth and protecteth sin, must not escape sin's punishment.

But 4thly. We must add to these one remark more, viz., that even at this stage he must not be *hated* or *forgotten*. 2 Thess. iii, 14, 15. We are not at liberty to hate and neglect publicans and sinners. And to place the offender among them is not to cast him beyond the limits of pity and compassion and love. No! And if, as the result of this last step in the discipline of the church, along with the efforts which, in love and pity may be made to reclaim him, he repent of his sin and return to God, then the church are bound again to confirm their love to him, and restore him to their confidence. Even in the very extreme case of the person referred to in the passage quoted, the Corinthian church were counselled to forgive, to comfort, and confirm their love towards their late offending, but now repenting, brother. And they are urged to this, "lest he should be swallowed up with over much sorrow." We must never lose sight of Jesus in all that we do, and like him, set a right estimate on *one soul*. Thus shall we be prepared to deal at once faithfully and compassionately. These verses give no countenance to the idea sometimes entertained, that an offending brother must be refused admission to the Lord's Supper while his case remains unsettled. This looks very like, if it be not in reality, executing the sentence before it is passed. And we have already noticed that neither does this passage encourage any one in withdrawing from the church because offended, or because some one is, or may be, accused of sin. This is taking the law in one's own hands. This is to deal out to the entire brotherhood the treatment which, should the worst charge be sustained, is only due to one. This, if carried out, would lead to the complete breaking up of the community. If the church should refuse to separate an impenitent offender, then we have no alternative left; we must withdraw from such a corrupt society.