

against an offending brother. Besides that, we fearfully endanger the peace of the Church—perhaps its very existence. But if we do *not* gain our brother, then we have direction in the next verse. In concluding this part of our subject, we beg to ask, are any of our readers still trespassing against God, and yet unforgiven? Ah, my friends! your God offended as he is, and as he may well be, has not stood aloof from you, has not reviled you to others. He has gone to you again and again, and to yourselves, in the secret silence of your own individual consciences, with no one nigh but himself. And He comes again on this page to day. He craves an interview; He begs you will listen to him: will you still continue to refuse? Will ye not hear? And what is his object? He seeks to *gain* you. O, wondrous love! And at what an expense does he seek this! “He has made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for you that ye might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Surely he must be in earnest. And he only asks you to him. He is now waiting that He may be gracious by forgiving you all your trespasses in the blood of Jesus. Only receive this boon and live, and live for ever—Amen! We now proceed in our exposition, to the consideration of verse 16th, which contains directions for the second step of the process for the removal of private offences.

And here we may be allowed to premise, that, as in regard to the first step, it is not to be taken unless warranted by the circumstances; so this second part of the rule ought not to be adopted until it is found impossible to settle the matter otherwise. If the offence can be removed, and good feeling restored, without having recourse to the second step, so much the better, its farther publicity is saved.—*but if not*, if every effort which love, guided by wisdom and prudence can devise, prove unsuccessful, then there is no other alternative left, we are commanded, verse 16,—“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Here you will observe we are not allowed to make the matter more public than is *absolutely necessary*. The Saviour still teaching us that the more privately such things are kept the better for their being amicably settled.

Now this second step proposes *one or other of two ends*, and these should be kept steadily in view in the whole process. And these are: either first, to gain the offending brother, or second, failing this, that there may be secured legal evidence to be laid before the church in the third step, where every word must be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses.

Observe then that our object in taking “one or two more” must be in the first place to gain our brother. Not to irritate, not to reprove, not to shut his mouth and condemn him. All of this that is needful, and a great deal more will be secured if we gain our brother. Let our aim then be to use every means which the united wisdom and disinterested love of the additional brethren can devise for the good of the offending brother. And in order to the accomplishment of this object, let me suggest to you the following counsel:

1. Let the “one or two” and I presume that in most cases the latter number will be employed, let the brethren selected be men of accredited *piety* and *wisdom*; men of *judgment* and *integrity*. This is not only necessary, for the mere transaction of the business, which is a delicate one and will require such qualifications,