

just falling—pass by him, priding ourselves on our strength, with so-called pity, better called *contempt* than love.

It may not be *convenient* to hold out the hand or say some kind word of loving rebuke or tender encouragement. It may give some trouble and annoyance—perhaps a little expense or danger—to do just as the good Samaritan would have done, in our case. It may seem very unreasonable to be disturbed in our ease; just as the man comfortable for the night felt when the laws of hospitality dragged him from his bed, when his friend at midnight would borrow three loaves of bread. But whatever may be the risk; however inconvenient; at whatever trouble;—we that are strong “*ought*” to bear the infirmities of the weak brother or sister. It is an opportunity for doing good which God has cast in our way, and for which we shall have to answer. “*I was naked and ye clothed me; forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me.*” Suffering humanity demands this self-sacrifice! Christ’s example enforces the debt; and we must pay it. “We that are strong” *owe it to the weak*, “to bear their infirmities.” We must bear their burdens would we *fulfill the law of Christ!*

III. Then it is *self-denial in order to the glory of God* and the *good* of men, to which St. Paul exhorts us as disciples and imitators of the self-denying Jesus.—By way of example he offers *himself*: “*even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved;*” 1 Cor. x. 33.

The apostle *objects* to the bad example of some. “If any man see thee that hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat those things

which are offered to idols?” 1 Cor. viii 10. He adds the evil consequence to be:—“Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” ver. 11. Observe, St. Paul does not say that this “*strong*” Corinthian *himself* received any injury from what he did. *He* knew that “an idol was nothing in the world,” and that therefore the idol-temple was nothing more than any other place; that the food which he ate there was in no degree affected by its having been offered to the idol. He was *strong in knowledge*. It was for *others* that his being there, and *seemingly* partaking of the idol-worship, was injurious. His example tempted others to do as he did; and many a weak brother was *emboldened* to do what *he believed* to be wrong—to eat those things which were offered to idols; believing at the same time that an idol was a being, and therefore that he was in some sort a partaker with that idol in what he ate.

True, all this was *mistake*. But the *weaker* brother believed it to be as he understood it, and acted accordingly, and was in danger of *injuring* his soul. The example of this “*strong*” man was *misleading* this weak brother to his injury—it might be to his ruin.

We see in this case the power of example. It is what we do, and not what we say, that tells on others.

Saying, without doing, is little better than *opinion*, albeit without power either for good or ill. But saying, and *doing* what we say, shows that we believe what we say; that is conviction to others, and comes home to them with just that force which personal character or station or learning can give. Then the example of one man over another is *power*, in proportion as that one man *excels* another in station, in society, or personal character, or anything else which usually gives influence.