

*not Himself.*" Their *infirmities* we are to bear—whatever may be called their infirmities, their *weaknesses*—whatever makes them less useful, less happy, less God's servants and soldiers; whatever makes them frail, whether of mind, or body, or spirit. The apostle *illustrates* his meaning; 1 Cor. viii. 10.

At Corinth, the meat which had been offered to their false gods was taken away and sold in the market. Some of the Corinthians, who knew that it could have received no contagion from "an idol which was *nothing*," from having been laid before it, bought this meat for their own use. Others, however, considered that, from its having been once offered in sacrifice, it had become in some sense *idolatrous*—not only would not themselves use it, but were offended that their fellow-Christians should do so.

Now mark St. Paul's *decision*.

He first declares the nothingness of an idol, and therefore what was offered in sacrifice to idols could not be in any way affected by it. Here he decides in favour of the strong, as to the *lawfulness* of their conduct. But was it *expedient*? All had not the same knowledge which they had, and therefore could not *see* as they did. These were *conscientious*, though they might be considered *scrupulous*; and probably their scrupulosity arose from their *ignorance*. They were brethren, too, equally beloved by Him who died for both parties. Then should "the strong" continue to do what was giving pain to these "weak" brethren? Should they mislead them, by example, to do what would wound their consciences, and perhaps tempt them to go back into idolatry? "Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" ver. 11. Here was a question for their Christian principles to decide. Be assured,

St. Paul adds, "When ye sin so against the brethren, ye sin against Christ."—Christ as the Head of the body, in the person of his members;—"Therefore" follow my example—"if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat as long as the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." "It is *good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak;*" Rom. xiv. 21.

Beloved, never did St. Paul follow Christ more closely than in this loving condescension to the *prejudices* of conscientious ignorance. Like his Master and only Teacher, "*he pleased not himself.*" And now disciples of the same Master are to do as he did—be *followers of Christ together with him*.

"We then that are *strong*"—in knowledge, virtue, or religion—we are to bear, assist these *weak ones* in carrying their burdens; just as some stalwart traveller manfully extends his hand to help a weak companion, or puts his shoulder to the wheel in a difficulty, or takes the burthen from the back of another weary and fainting, and for a while carries it himself.

*This bearing each other's burden* is what the Holy Spirit would teach us as a moral and religious duty, as *members one of another*; i.e. *beneficent sympathy, practical love*—a lesson the very opposite of that which says, "*Be ye warmed and be ye clothed;*" and yet gives not that which is necessary for the body (James ii. 16);—a lesson more like Him who *did* as well as taught a self-denying regard for the well-being of others—"for even Christ pleased not himself."

Not to please ourselves—not to pass by some poor weak brother, for whom Christ died as well as for us, labouring under his load, it may be of sin or some evil habit—knees trembling, heart fainting,