

## PREPARATIONS FOR LENT.

"He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death."—*St. Luke* xviii. 32, 33.

Think, what it is to have a suffering Saviour, I do not mean only, how blessed it is to have a Saviour who has suffered *for us*, who has "borne our grief, and carried our sorrows;" who was "wounded for our transgressions," and "bruised for our iniquities." This is, indeed, the very crown of all blessings,—the central sun which sheds its light and glory on all the Gospel. But there are other thoughts which flow from the mention of a suffering Saviour. We are—at least we profess to be—disciples of that Saviour. We would copy His holy example. We would walk in His blessed steps. And can we think we are doing so, whilst we live a life of ease and luxury and self-indulgence, seldom or never denying ourselves anything in which we take pleasure, seldom or never giving up our own will that we may do God's will? And yet, is not this just the life numbers lead, who still profess to be Christ's disciples? I do not speak of persons living in known and wilful sin, who set at nought the warning voice of conscience, and know full well that they are not living up to their Christian calling and profession. I speak of moral, upright, well-conducted persons. Yes, and I speak of more: I speak of persons with much religious feeling, with right intentions, with godly practice. And I say, I am sure such persons often take a low and imperfect view of what it is to follow the suffering Jesus. They do not hold, or do not remember, that if they would plant their footsteps in His, they must plant them in a path of *self-denial*. "I seek not Mine own will:" thus speaks the Leader. "I seldom thwart or deny my own will:" this is what the follower is obliged too often to confess.

Oh! ye, who really, honestly, wish and resolve to walk in the path your Master trod,—ye, who, when ye can see that path, will bravely enter it,—ye, who, when ye can trace the foot-marks before you, hesitate not to tread in them, whatever rough, hard, places they may lead you through; think I pray you, what it is to have a suffering Saviour. Others may want to claim the Saviour, and reject the suffering. Ye *feel* this cannot be. The more ye gaze on the holy Form that goeth before you,—the closer ye press after your Divine Leader,—the more narrowly ye note where His every footstep hath marked the way for you—the more ye will see that suffering is the very token of Christ, and that the very name of the path ye would follow is *self-denial*. Oh! as ye gaze with straining eye on the dim Form, that solemnly, yet how lovingly beckons you on, do ye not trace the outline of that cruel thorny crown, do ye not see the great drops of blood falling down to the ground, do ye not mark how he bendeth His holy head beneath the crushing weight of that cross, on which He is so soon to hang? Whom would ye follow? "A man clothed in soft raiment?" Nay; but "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

And now, why is this coming season of Lent marked out for us? We say that it is kept in memory of Christ's wonderful fast of forty days in the wilderness. Aye, but it is far more than this. It is a season which should bring us closer to Christ in His *self-denial*. It is a season in which we should seek to draw near to Him as our suffering Saviour. Can we tread more closely in the path in which he trod? Can we give up our own will more than we do, that