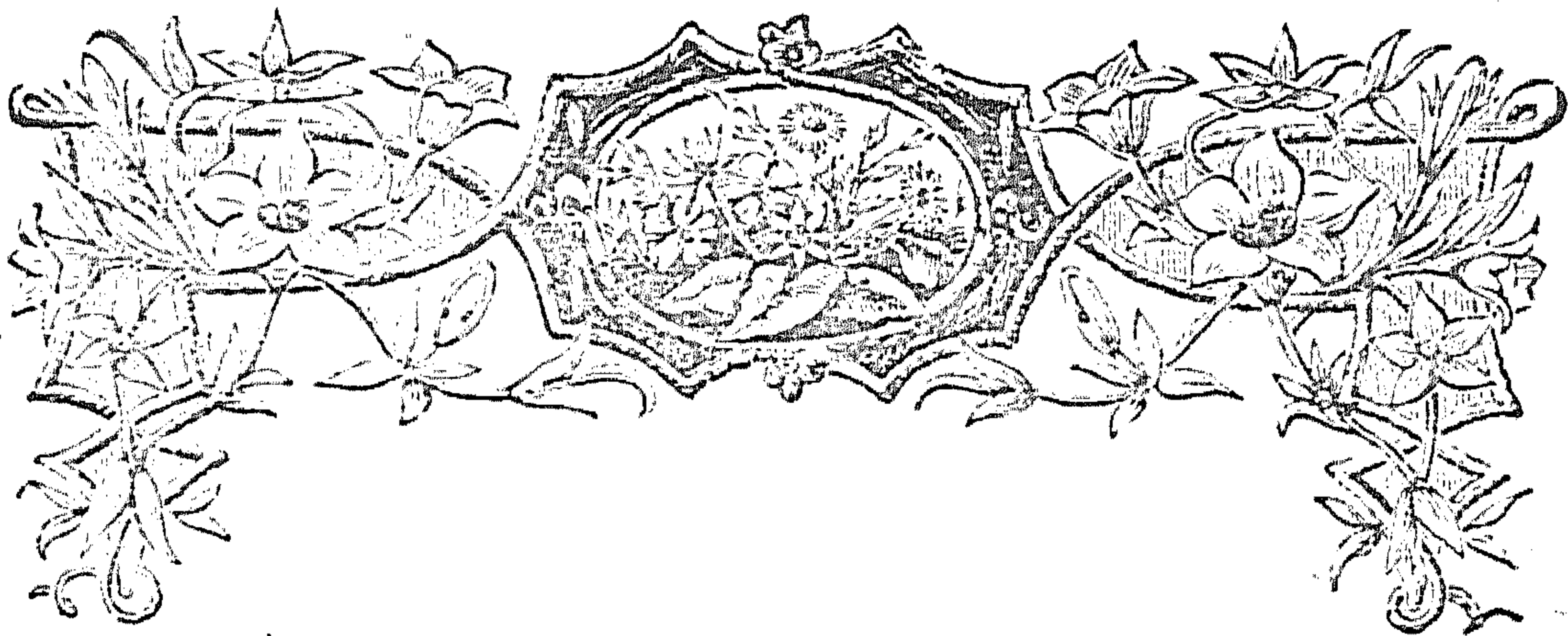


a community called ...

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HE DIED FOR US.

IF some one could now call you, and lead you to a place where he should point you to a friend who had just died, and should then say, "You were in danger of which you were not aware; he knew of it, and he has laid down his life to save yours,"—how much would the sight affect you, how often be thought of, and how long remembered! The Gospel of Jesus Christ directs you to such a sight, and calls you to behold a Friend, ten thousand times better than any earthly friend, who was crucified for you. The Bible gives the history of his sufferings and death, and tells their cause, design, and effect, showing their infinite im-

portance to every child of man. The sufferings of Christ were predicted by ancient prophets, were described by the evangelists, were varied, intense, and dreadful, and were unlike all other sufferings ever endured in this world of sorrows.

They were predicted. It was foretold a thousand years before Jesus appeared that cruel men would beset him, would pierce his hands and feet, would mock at his sufferings, would bring him to death, and would then part his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture. Psa. xxii. Seven hundred years before his coming another prophet foretold that he would give his back to the smiters, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hide not his face from shame and spitting; that his visage would be marred more than any man, and his countenance more than the sons of men; that he would, in general estimation, have no form nor comeliness, would be despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; that he would be smitten, wounded, bruised, and

scourged for others; be oppressed and afflicted, and brought as a Lamb to the slaughter; be dumb before his persecutors; be taken from prison and from judgment; have his grave appointed with the wicked, but be buried with the rich; would pour out his soul unto death; would be numbered with transgressors; would intercede for transgressors; would be bruised even by the Lord; would die for the iniquity of men; but would live again, have his cause prosper, and see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Isa. l, lii, liii.

All this, according to the evangelists, was literally fulfilled; and the accomplishment affords the strongest proof that the Gospel is from God. See, in their narratives, the fulfillment in what Jesus endured when betrayed by Judas, seized by the officers, buffeted and spit upon before Caiaphas, and by him pronounced worthy of death; scourged by Pilate, and at length by him reluctantly condemned; mocked by Herod and his soldiers; bearing his cross, and nailed to it, and then more cruelly reviled and insulted while hanging in

torture upon it. Yet worse than all this was the travail of his soul, when, in Gethsemane, his inward agony caused the bloody sweat, and when, on the cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

The sufferings and sorrows of Christ were not those of a mere mortal, but of the Lord of glory, who, in his Divine nature, was exalted above all suffering. Strange would it be for a holy angel to suffer, but far more wonderful is it that, for man, the Lord Jesus, who in his Divine nature was the creator of angels, died. His sorrows were peculiar also in consequence of his innocence. All other sorrows have been those of sinful beings. No other innocent being ever suffered. He deserved no sufferings; all other men have deserved them; but he took our sufferings: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." His sufferings were altogether voluntary. No one could compel him to suffer or to die. He might have declined the awful commission of saving sinners by suffering in their stead, and have been just and holy still; but he came as a will-

ing victim, and said of his life, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." John x, 18. But the grand peculiarity of his sufferings—that which will cause them to be remembered with gratitude to all eternity—was their *atoning character*: he died for the sins of many. His sufferings were designed to expiate guilt; and as was their design, so is their efficacy. Other sorrows never blotted out one sin: these have blotted out millions of sins, and will blot out millions more.

This truth is taught in many passages, partly referring to the *design* of his death, and partly to its *effect*; but all representing it as vicarious, or *borne for others*, and bringing blessings to them. In general, it is declared that his humiliation and poverty were endured with the design of enriching sinful men; though rich, he became poor, that they, through his poverty, might be rich. 2 Cor. viii, 9. The Father gave his only-begotten Son; Christ died for us; we judge, if one died for all, then were all dead. John iii, 16, Rom. v, 6–8; 2 Cor. v, 14; Eph. v, 25; Heb.

ii, 9. Still more expressly it is asserted that he suffered for the sins of men, as a *substitute* in the place of the guilty: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;" "He bare the sin of many;" was made "sin for us;" "was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." Isa. liii, 5, 12; 2 Cor. v, 21; Rom. iv, 21.

The offering that Jesus thus made of himself is further described as a *ransom*. 1 Tim. ii, 5; Mark x, 45. A ransom (as is shown in Exod. xxi, 30; Num. xxxv, 31) was a price paid to save the forfeited life of a condemned criminal. Thus Christ gave himself and his life as a ransom to atone for our sins, and redeem our condemned souls from condemnation. A very early Christian writer, referring to the love of God, impressively remarks: "Himself gave his own Son a ransom for us; the holy for the lawless; the harmless for the wicked; the just for the unjust; the incorruptible for the corruptible; the immortal for the mortal. For what else could cover our sins besides his righteousness? In whom was

it possible that we, the lawless and the unholy, could be justified, save by the Son of God alone? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable wisdom! O unexpected benefit! that the sins of many should be hidden by One righteous, and the righteousness of one justify many sinners."

The views thus furnished of the design of the Lord's sufferings are further confirmed in *the effects* ascribed to his death: "With his stripes we are healed." Isa. liii, 5. Deliverance from the curse of the broken law and redemption from condemnation are through his blood. Gal. iii, 13; Col. i, 14. The complete pardon of all sin, as no longer charged to the believing soul, is ascribed to his blood, (1 John i, 7; Heb. i, 2, 3,) which is so efficacious, that he "obtained" for his redeemed "eternal redemption," (Heb. ix, 12,) which sanctifies forever, and has everlasting efficacy. Heb. x, 14. Justification and the enjoyment of divine favor are traced to the same source. Rom. v, 9; Isa. liii, 11. From the same fountain flow joy and peace with God, and ulti-

mately glorious, heavenly perfection. Rom. v, 1, 11; Eph. v, 25-27.

Take one other view; look up to the heavenly world, read the description, (Rev. vii, 9-17,) and observe all these delightful truths confirmed there. What behold you? A multitude which no man can number, all holy, happy, and triumphant. How reached they that world of light? Not by their own sufferings, though many were martyrs; not by their virtues, their holy zeal, their unconquered firmness, their glowing love; but they "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

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