

WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS

Few believers ever learn to truly love the cross of Christ. For though it offers great deliverance, it also demands great sacrifice. Isaac Watts drives this truth home through the words and music of this powerful hymn. Watts was deeply disappointed with the hymns of his day, which failed to inspire his parishioners to genuine worship and holy living. His dissatisfaction led him to compose more than six hundred hymns, all designed to call his congregation to a deeper knowledge and worship of God. This hymn was written in 1707 for use in a Communion service.

The music of this hymn was borrowed from Gregorian chant. Its rich, grave tones call those who sing it to realize the seriousness of Christ's sacrificial death. What shall we offer to God in grateful return for His gracious gift? All that we are and have is but a small offering in return for such great love.

WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most-
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
United Methodist Hymnal #298,299