



Pastor David's Weekly Devotional

In 1707 Isaac Watts published the now classic hymn “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”, which accurately and beautifully portrays the glory in the cross of Christ. Let me encourage you to read, or sing, this song very slowly and meditatively in order to grasp the richness of these verses.

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.

Watts was thirty-three years old when he wrote that hymn, and published it in a collection of hymns for his congregation to sing. Regarded as “the father of English hymnody”, he is credited as having written some 750 hymns. His hymns were known for their simple words, but deep and rich theology. “[Watts] gives us the perfect combination that everyone in the church ought to be striving to reach: passion and feeling grounded on solid theological foundations” (Douglas Bond, *The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts*, p.26).

Interestingly, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” is one of the most known and most cherished of all the hymns Watts’ published. The words of this hymn, especially that of the second verse, were inspired by what the apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14: “*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*” Speaking for all true Christians, Paul here professed that his life is ultimately identified and influenced by the cross of Christ.

Commenting on this second verse (of Watt’s hymn), author Douglas Bond offered this personal testimony: “Watts, by his sense of wonder at the cross of Christ, and with skillful strokes of his poetic pen, showed me the absurdity of my view of the world. He deftly stirred up in me the ugliness and utter inappropriateness of my pride and boasting, my preoccupation with empty things that so captivated my teen world. By vividly holding before me the cross of Jesus, he demanded that I drop everything and reckon with it. By his words, Watts compelled me to join him, to see with him the One who hung on that cross for me” (Douglas Bond, *The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts*, p.26).

The cross of Christ invites us to see the splendor of God’s amazing love and unmerited grace. But is also calls us to come and die. The gore and glory of the cross demand that we take seriously our desperate need for a Savior. The cross of Christ confronts our pride, assaults our sense of self-righteousness, and exposes our wretchedness. Such graphic language reminds us that an instrument of cruel torture and death became God’s wondrous instrument for our salvation.

Through the cross of Christ, we see that God’s love is indeed “so amazing, so divine” and we are wise to confess that it “demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Together in and for Christ,
Pastor David

Scripture Readings for the Week (Monday – Sunday ~ Week #44):

Deuteronomy 7-9; 2Chronicles 29-32; Psalm 125-127; Ecclesiastes 3-4; Zeph.; Acts 11-12; James 4-5

Recommended Reading:

“A Heart for God” by Sinclair B. Ferguson