

“Behold the Savior of Mankind” ~ Samuel Wesley

On February, 9, 1709, at Epworth Rectory, the Rev. Samuel Wesley, sat in his room writing the following lines

*Behold the Savior of mankind
Nailed to the shameful tree!
How vast the love that Him inclined
To bleed and die for thee!*

It was the beginning of a new hymn. Having completed its four verses, Samuel Wesley left the manuscript near the window, and went to sleep for the night.

That night the Rectory caught fire, and the whole building, with all its contents, was utterly destroyed. In one room slept little John Wesley, age five, with his three sisters, the baby and the nurse. When the alarm sounded, the nurse seized the baby and rushed from the room, calling to the other children to follow her, which they did, with the exception of John, who was still fast asleep.

Waking soon after, he found his escape cut off by the flames, but climbed the chest which stood by the window where he was quickly observed. His father made two attempts to reach him by the stairs, but was beaten back by the flames. There was no time to fetch a ladder, but a spectator urged a smaller man to climb on his shoulders and try to reach the child at the window, which he succeeded in doing at the second attempt.

Hardly had he lifted the boy out to safety than the whole roof fell in, fortunately falling inward, or the child and his rescuers would have been killed. “A brand plucked from the burning.”

“Come neighbours,” cried Wesley, as he clasped John in his arms, “let us kneel down; let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go; I am rich enough!”

Yet that night there was one other escape from the flames. Later on, some one walking in the Rectory garden, near the ruins of the house, noticed a piece of paper lying on the ground, and picked it up. It was the Wesley’s new hymn, blown through the open window from the burning house, which, like John Wesley himself, was thus saved from the fire! John later published this hymn in A Collection of Psalms and Hymns, titled “On the Crucifixion.

*Behold the Savior of mankind
Nailed to the shameful tree!
How vast the love that Him inclined
To bleed and die for thee!*

*Though far unequal our low praise
To Thy vast sufferings prove,
O Lamb of God, thus all our days,
Thus will we grieve and love.*

*Hark, how He groans, while nature shakes,
And earth's strong pillars bend;
The temple's veil in sunder breaks,
The solid marbles rend*

*"'Tis done!" The precious ransom's paid,
"Receive My soul," He cries!
See where He bows His sacred head!
He bows His head, and dies!
But soon He'll break death's envious chain,
And in full glory shine:
O Lamb of God! was ever pain,
Was ever love, like Thine?*

*Thy loss our ruin did repair;
Death by death is slain;
Thou wilt at length exalt us where
Thou dost in glory reign.*