

Rescue the Perishing

A Hymn Story by Harry Eskew

A number of Fanny Crosby's hymns were set to music by William Howard Doane, a successful Baptist businessman who wrote more than 2,200 tunes and edited more than forty collections. Crosby hymns set to music by Doane include "To God be the glory," "I am thine, O Lord," "Jesus, keep me near the cross," "Pass me not, O gentle Savior" and "Rescue the perishing."

Fortunately, we have Fanny Crosby's account of the writing of "Rescue the perishing," published in *Fanny Crosby's Story of Ninety-Four Years* (S. Trevena Jackson, 1915, pp. 76-78):

It was written in the year 1869, when I was forty-nine years old. . . . Many of my hymns were written after experiences in New York mission work. This one was thus written. I was addressing a large company of working men one hot summer evening, when the thought kept forcing itself on my mind that some mother's boy must be rescued that night or not at all. So I made a pressing plea that if there were a boy present who had wandered from his mother's home and teaching, he would come to me at the close of the service. A young man of eighteen came forward and said, "Did you mean me? I promised my mother to meet her in heaven, but as I am now living that will be impossible." We prayed for him and he finally arose with a new light in his eyes and exclaimed in triumph: "Now I can meet my mother in heaven, for I have found God."

*A few days before Mr. Doane had sent me the subject, "Rescue the Perishing," and while I sat there that evening, the line came to me, "Rescue the Perishing, care for the dying." I could think of nothing else that night. When I retired it was ready for the melody. The next day my song was written out and forwarded to Mr. Doane, who wrote the beautiful and touching music as it now stands to my hymn. (Excerpted from William J. Reynolds, *Companion to Baptist Hymnal*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1976, p. 185)*

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

Refrain:

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.

Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
Waiting the penitent child to receive;
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently,
He will forgive if they only believe.

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
Chords that are broken will vibrate once more.

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way, patiently win them,
Tell the poor wanderer a Savior has died.