O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

1 O sacred head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down;
now scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown;
mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain.
for this thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end?

2 What thou, my Lord, hast suffered was all for sinners’ gain:
Lo, here I fall, my Savior! ’Tis I deserve thy place;
O make me thine forever; and should I fainting be,
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call thee mine.

3 What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend,
O sacred head, what glory, what bliss till now was thine!
look on me with thy favor, and grant to me thy grace.
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to thee.

This poignant hymn originated in a series of Holy Week meditations focused on the parts of Christ’s crucified body: feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart, face. First joined to secular words, this chorale melody has appeared with this text since the mid-17th century.

TEXT: Latin, 12th or 13th cent.; trans. James Waddell Alexander, 1830, alt.
MUSIC: Hans Leo Hassler, 1601; harm. Johann Sebastian Bach, 1729

PASSION CHORALE 7.6.7.6.D