

At Calvary- June's Hymn of the Month 2026

by
Bill Dagle

The Moody Bible Institute is still graduating young men and women to serve the Lord today as it has done for over a hundred years. It was D.L. Moody who realized the importance of raising up the next generation to carry the gospel and thus founded this school. Moody chose his friend and co-worker, Dr. R.A. Torrey to be the first president of the Institute. In 1905, Dr. Torrey shared a story about a rebellious teenager who eventually became the inspiration for the writing of that grand old hymn, *At Calvary*. The story goes like this:

When I was president of the Moody Bible Institute,, I received a letter from a very concerned pastor who told me of a son who was causing himself and his family a great deal of trouble. His life was really mixed And the father felt that attendance at Moody would help. I advised the father that even though I sympathized with him, for I was a father; yet, because I was running a Bible school and not a reform school, I had to deny his request. After many letters of pleading his cause, I finally gave in with the stipulation that the rebellious teen must see me each day and make every effort to abide by the rules and requirements of the Institute.

Torrey went on to say that the boy faithfully visited his office each day; and with wisdom from God's word, he answered the questions that had been keeping the boy from God. Finally, after many months of counseling, the prayers of the boy's father were answered when young William R. Newell received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

Thirty years later, as a teacher at Moody, Mr. Newell was recounting those turbulent years as a rebellious teen; and as he was rejoicing in his salvation, the words of a poem flooded his mind. His mind was filled with a word picture of what had happened in his life and also in the lives of all those who surrender to Christ. The new man in Christ could now write:

Years I spent in vanity and pride
Caring not my Lord was crucified
Knowing not it was for me He died
On Calvary
O the love that drew salvation's plan
O the grace that brought it down to man
O the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary

Mercy there was great and grace was free
Pardon there was multiplied to me
There my burdened soul found liberty
At Calvary