

JOIN US FOR AN 8-WEEK STUDY OF HTPC'S

# *First Principles*

A decorative flourish consisting of a horizontal line with a central dot and two pointed ends extending outwards.

**SUNDAYS**

**5:45 - 7:00 PM**

**SEPTEMBER 13 - NOVEMBER 8**

in the fellowship hall

# And Can It Be That I Should Gain

1. And can it be that I should gain an int'rest in the Savior's blood?  
Died he for me, who caused his pain? For me, who him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be  
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

# And Can It Be That I Should Gain

2. 'Tis myst'ry all! Th'Immortal dies: who can explore his strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries to sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore, let angel minds inquire no more.

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be  
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

# And Can It Be That I Should Gain

3. He left his Father's throne above (so free, so infinite his grace!),  
humbled himself (so great his love!) and bled for all his chosen race!  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free, for, O my God, it found out me!

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be  
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

# And Can It Be That I Should Gain

4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray; I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
my chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be  
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

# And Can It Be That I Should Gain

5. No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in him, is mine!  
Alive in him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine,  
bold I approach th'eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be  
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

# Biography of Geerhardus Vos

- Born in 1862 in Netherlands. **Christian family.** Father was Dutch Reformed minister.
- Family moved to Michigan when Geerhardus was 19. Trained in Grand Rapids, **Princeton** and then Europe.
- Offered prominent teaching position in Netherlands at very young age. His parents desired he stay in States. He deferred to his parents' wishes. Was told his decision would mean “academic suicide” for him. (I'd say the Lord got the last word on this one!)
- Eventually, Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton until retirement. Colleague, **dear friend and daily walking partner of B.B. Warfield.** (**Christian fellowship/community!**) **Cornelius Van Til's** most influential professor.
- The essence of his **theological contribution** —

**Bible:** unfolding of history of redemption for God's people which culminated in the arrival of the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. *Eternity and time.* Contra biblical critics.

# Summary

- Sermon preached to seminary students at the chapel of Princeton Seminary
- Goal: to define **new covenant** ministry in its **surpassing glory** to ministry of the **old covenant**
- **Paul** in 2 Corinthians 3-4 was answering godless attacks upon his ministry, which had emerged **from within church**
- While referencing himself, Paul's answer centered upon the exalted **Lord Jesus Christ** whom he knew by grace and was **intent on proclaiming** in times of peace **and** times of duress.
- **Paul's Gospel is our Gospel. His new covenant ministry is our new covenant ministry. Pray we will follow in this apostolic train.**



# 2 Corinthians 3:1–4:6

**1** Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? **2** You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. **3** And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

**4** Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. **5** Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, **6** who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

**7** Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, **8** will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? **9** For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

**10** Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. **11** For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

# 2 Corinthians 3:1–4:6 (cont.)

**12** Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, **13** not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. **14** But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. **15** Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. **16** But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. **17** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **18** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

**Chapter 4 — 1** Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. **2** But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. **3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **4** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

# Context

(Paragraphs 1-5)

- Ruthless attacks against his person and against his teaching.
- Accused of teaching “veiled Jesus.” Opponents demanded instead that the clarity of the Mosaic Covenant be re-instituted; that a Messiah be proclaimed who conformed to **their** understanding of the Mosaic Covenant.
- But like all false teaching, this error would strike at the heart of the Person of Christ — “A certain gospel requires a certain kind of Christ, and a certain type of Christ a certain gospel.” NEVER FORGET THIS. Every false religion has a false view of Christ.
- Paul’s office was criticized since it was committed to an allegedly weak Savior.

# Context (cont.)

- Paul had to defend his office because he had to defend his Christ, for the sake of Christ's honor and the spiritual well-being of the church. "The pride of office was stronger in him than the sense of personal honor." NEVER FORGET THIS EITHER. Church controversy should be for sake of Christ's honor, not personal grudges.
- Paul's set forth **glory of his New Covenant message** and therefore the distinction of being its message-bearer...**triumphal procession** with God as the conqueror and Paul a follower in God's train. What opponents intended for evil, God intended for good. Paul's Spirit-inspired words for our edification today, but occasioned by bitter attacks.
- Two pairs contrasted: **God and Moses** in contrast with **Christ and Paul**. New covenant ministry (embodied in Paul) greater than Old Covenant ministry (embodied in Moses). ASTOUNDING WHEN ONE CONSIDER GREATNESS OF MOSES.

# Paul's Answer

(Paragraphs 6-12)

## Two main points:

**1. Paul contrasted transitoriness** of Old Covenant glory (it passed away) with the **eternal, abiding/remaining** New Covenant glory. Moses' veiled face to hide fading glory. Paul's open face because basing glory.

“The note of futility and depression has disappeared, and in place of this the rapture of victory over death and decay, the exultant feeling of immersion in the atmosphere of eternity prevail...The *joy of working in the dawn of the world to come* quickens the pulse of all New Testament servants of Christ. Paul felt that the product of his labors, the output of his life, would shine with unfading splendor in the palace of God.” **NEW COVENANT MINISTRY IS A JOY/DELIGHT, NOT A BURDEN. AWAY WITH ALL DRUDGERY VIEWS OF CHURCH/MINISTRY.**

# Paul's Answer (cont.)

(Paragraphs 6-12)

## Two main points (cont.)

2. A difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant **clearness/openness**.

- Moses with veiled face; Paul with unveiled face because of the partial quality to Old Covenant knowledge compared with New Covenant knowledge. “Every preparatory stage in the history of redemption can fully understand itself only in the light of that which fulfills it. The veil of the Old Covenant is lifted only in Christ.” Of course, Israel guilty for mishandling Old Testament.
- “**Not the delicate** procedure of the diplomat, **who hides** his aim, but **the stately stepping forward of the herald** who renders an **authoritative** pronouncement, characterizes his task to Paul's own mind. He discards all **human** artifice and invention, all unsincere and undignified devices evidently employed by some at the time, as they are still not infrequently at the present time, to render the gospel palatable to his hearers. **He scorns, where principles are concerned, all compromise and concession:** “Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, **we faint not**, but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, **but by the manifestation of the truth** commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:1, 2). astounds SOUNDS LIKE VAN TIL!!

# Five Observations from Vos

(Paragraphs 13-18)

1. “There is a **straightforwardness**, a **simplicity** in preaching, which is proportionate to the preacher's own faith in the absoluteness and inherent truthfulness of his message. No shallow optimism about the adjustableness of Christianity to ever changing conditions, about its self-rejuvenating power after apparent decline, can possibly make up for a lack of this fundamental conviction.” **THAT. WILL. PREACH.**  
Consider ministerial Botox alternatives to keep a dying message looking young and relevant!!

# Five Observations from Vos

(Paragraphs 13-18)

2. New Covenant ministry is bound up with the **person and work of the Savior**. “What is possessed by the New Covenant is not the glory of God as such, but the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” “...reflecting back the Christ-glory caught by himself unto others. To behold Christ and to make others behold him is the sub-stance of his ministry.” “The entire Christian life, root and stem and branch and blossom, is one continuous fellowship with Christ.”



# Five Observations from Vos

(Paragraphs 13-18)

3. “But to say that the gospel is full of Christ is still too general a statement. What the apostle affirms is that it is particularly the gospel of the **glory** of Christ...**the Savior’s exalted state** since his resurrection...” “...mirror is not an end in itself, but exists for the sake of what is seen through it, so the gospel serves no other purpose than to bring men face to face with the glory of Christ.” “The humblest of preachers surpasses in this respect the greatest of Old Testament evangelists. He carries a gospel all-fragrant and all-radiant with Christ.”

# Five Observations from Vos

(Paragraphs 13-18)

4. Paul's New Covenant ministry is "a ministry of **abundant forgiveness and righteousness.**" It is the glorifies, exalted Christ to whom we are united and in whom we receive full forgiveness and righteousness. The Christ of Acts 2! Old Covenant: Gospel came through language of symbols. But now the veil has been rent "and through it an unobstructed view is obtained of the glory of God n the face of Jesus Christ."

# Five Observations from Vos

(Paragraphs 13-18)

5. The **personal** quality to New Covenant ministry —
  - a) the **servants** of the New Covenant are **internally and permanently transformed** by beholding the image of the Lord (Paul's conversion— and that vision “repeating itself thousands of time...no less miraculously.”)
  - b) they effect a similar **transformation in others** to whom through their ministry the knowledge of the glorified Savior comes

In contrast to *temporary, provisional* glory for Moses and his inability to communicate it to others.

# The Relationship Between Christ and the Holy Spirit

(Paragraphs 19-20)

- “The inseparableness of the exalted Christ and the Holy Spirit in the world of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 3:17: “The Lord is the Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 15:45: “Christ became a life-giving Spirit.”
- Invisible background to Paul’s preaching. Ministry from heaven conducted by the Christ of glory...”life-blood of the supernatural pulsed through [Paul’s ministry].” His service, at each point where it touched men, marked the line and opened channels for the introduction of divine creative forces into human souls. So vivid was this consciousness of involvement in the supernatural that nothing short of a comparison of God's word through him with the divine word at the first creation could adequately express it to Paul's mind: ‘God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts for the purpose of our imparting the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ’ (2 Cor. 4:6).” Is this how you think about OUR church? **GATES OF HELL WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST CHRIST’S PURPOSES.**

# Implications for All

(Paragraph 21)

- **Every Christian** participated in the same New Covenant glory which Paul did as an apostle! “We all are transformed” (2 Cor. 3:18)

“It was a reason for profound satisfaction to Paul that he needed not stand in the midst of the congregation of God as another Moses, partaking of a light from God in which the others could not share, solitary in his splendor, but that the larger share of what he affirmed of himself had through him become the **possession of the simplest believer**, a transfiguration of spirit like his own by the beholding of the Lord. Refracted from numberless mirrors, **the light multiplied and intensified itself for each on whom it fell**. Nevertheless, even so a measure of incommunicable distinction remained.”

# Implications for Ministers

(Paragraph 22)

- “Since the reproduction into the likeness of Christ is dependent on and proportionate to the vision of the Savior, and since this vision from the nature of the case is more constantly present to the minister of the Gospel than to the common believer, it follows that in the former an altogether unique result may be expected. So it was undoubtedly with Paul. He had no need of testing the principle in others; a more direct and convincing evidence lay in its effect upon himself. He was aware of a **renewal of the inner man, progressing from day to day**, and in which there was **observable this law of increase**, that the **more** he did to **make Christ known**, the **deeper the lineaments of the character of Christ were impressed upon his soul...**” PRAY FOR YOUR MINISTERS! Even our sufferings as means of this transformation.

# Implications for Refuting Ongoing Error in the Church

(Paragraph 23)

- “In modernized apparel they [old errors] confront us still to the present day. There are still abroad forms of a **Christless gospel**. There prevails still a **subtle form of legalism** [social gospel in Vos’ day; rebranded as social justice movement today] which would **rob the Savior of his crown of glory, earned** by the **cross**, and would make of him a **second Moses**, offering us the stones of the law instead of the life-bread of the gospel. And, oh the pity and shame of it, the Jesus that is being preached but too often is a **Christ after the flesh**, a religious genius, the product of evolution, **powerless to save! Let us pray that it may be given to the church to repudiate and cast out this error with the resoluteness of Paul.**” Revoice. “Hurting/ Oppressed sexual minority groups need “sympathy” not law and Gospel. Christ “feels sorry” for “hurting people” rather than actually saving sinful rebels. Issues in our church and former Presbytery of late.

# Implications for Refuting Ongoing Error in the Church

(Paragraph 23)

- There is need for her ministers of placing themselves ever afresh in the light of **the great apostolic consciousness** revealed in our text. They should learn once more to bear their message out of the fulness of conviction that it is an **unchangeable message**, reliable as the veracity of God himself. Grant God, that it may become on the lips of his servants truly from age to age, a gospel from which the name of Christ crowds out every other human name, good tidings of atonement and righteousness and supernatural renewal; **to preacher and people alike**, what it was to Paul and his converts, a mirror of vision and transfiguration after the image of the Lord.” THIS STUFF CAN BE SUBTLE.