



21 February 2025

And can it be?

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) was a well known minister and song writer. Even though a minister, he did not have assurance of being saved, he did not have peace.

In May of 1738 he read Martin Luther's commentary on the New Testament book of Galatians. On May 21 he wrote that he "now found peace with God and rejoiced in the hope of loving Christ." He marked that day as the time of his conversion.



Several days later he wrote a hymn we still sing, "And Can It Be?". The first verse poses four questions:

- And can it be that I should gain an interest 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, should die for me?

These questions did not express doubt, but amazement, wonder and peace for what Christ did for him. He felt like people of Israel God rescued.

"There were those who lived in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in misery and chains, because they had rebelled against the words of God and rejected the plan of the Most High. ... Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them from their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke their bands apart" (Psalm 107:10-11, 13-14).

Wesley wrote the hymn with six verses. Four are in our hymnal. The second verse in our hymnal focuses on the humility of Christ in coming down from heaven to die so by His grace we could be saved. As the apostle Paul wrote,

"you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich"
(2 Corinthians 8:9).

And, “He [Christ] already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Wesley closes this verse with a shout, “O praise my God, it [God’s infinite grace and mercy] reaches me!” Every believer should join this fortissimo shout of praise!

Verse three describes his imprisoned spirit and Christ breaking the chains and setting him free, as I noted earlier.

The fourth verse rejoices, “No condemnation now I dread.” As the apostle Paul declared, “there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). And so Wesley sang, “Bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown through Christ, my own.” Yes, as Paul wrote, in Christ Jesus “we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him” (Ephesians 3:12).

Whatever is going on in your life today, join in this hymn’s chorus of praise,

Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me!

Pastor Lyle