

# God, The Author of Evangelism

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## *The Triune God as Author of Evangelism*

*Evangelism has its roots in eternity.*

Theologians speak of the *pactum salutis*, made from everlasting by the three persons of the Godhead. The term *pactum salutis* may be translated either *covenant of redemption* or *council of redemption*. The writer prefers the latter rendering because the term *covenant* is used generally in theology to designate an agreement made by God with man and historically administered. Be that as it may, the truth of the matter is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit before the world was, unitedly planned the salvation of sinners.

In that plan, God the Father was to send His Son into the world to redeem it, God the Son was voluntarily to come into the world in order to merit salvation by His obedience unto death, and God the Holy Spirit was to apply salvation to sinners by the instilling of renewing grace within them.

Scripture plainly teaches the reality of this council of redemption. Especially in the writings of John, the Father is repeatedly said to have sent the Son. For but one example, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Christ spoke of a commission given Him by the Father. For instance, toward the close of His earthly ministry He reported, as it were, to the Father: "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). In such a passage, among others, as Isaiah 53:12 prominent mention is made of the reward given by the Father to the Son for His accomplished work: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Just as clearly does Scripture teach that the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son. Jesus promised His disciples "the Holy Ghost, whom," he said, "the Father will send in my name" (John 14: 26), and He described the third person of the Trinity as "the Comforter, whom I will send you from the Father" (John 15: 26).

In short, before the world was, the Triune God formed a plan of salvation to be executed in its several reciprocally distributed parts by the Father as Sender and Principal, by the Son as Sent, Mediator, and Sender, and by the Holy Spirit as Sent and Applier.

It follows that the Triune God is the author of salvation. And, inasmuch as He has executed in time the eternal plan of salvation, has revealed its execution in the gospel, and has ordained the gospel as the indispensable means of salvation, it is no less clear that the Triune God is the author of evangelism.

## *The Father as Author of Evangelism*

God the Father is the author of evangelism. He conceived evangelism in eternity. Likewise in eternity He commissioned the Son to merit salvation for sinners by His substitutionary death on the accursed cross and by His rendering to the Father on behalf of sinners that perfect obedience the reward of which is eternal life.

He inspired prophets of old to foretell the coming of the Son of God in the flesh and to predict that through suffering He would enter into His glory (Luke 24:26). Through the evangelical prophet Isaiah, He depicted the suffering "servant of Jehovah" (Isa. 53), issued the universal gospel invitation, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22), and foretold the glorious day when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

He ordained the bloody sacrifices of the old dispensation to foreshadow the Son's saving sacrifice on Calvary's cross. "When the fulness of the time was come" he "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law", in order that His people "might receive

the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4: 4, 5).

At the beginning of the God-man’s public ministry the Father sent down upon Him the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (Luke 3:22) and thus qualified Him for his mediatorial labors. He anointed Him “to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18,19).

He gave, He surrendered, He sacrificed, His only begotten Son in order that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have life everlasting (John 3:16).

He sustained His Son in bearing the inestimable burden of the wrath of the holy and just God against the sin of all mankind so that, when the Son was forsaken of God and in that forsakenness suffered the anguish of very hell, He still clung to the Father as “my God” (Matt. 27:46).

By raising the Son from the dead the Father put the stamp of His unqualified approval on the finished work of the Son, for He was raised, not merely that we might be justified, but because we had been justified by His vicarious death (Rom. 4:25).

Because the Son “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” the Father “hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:8-11).

At Pentecost God the Father imparted to the church the power of the Holy Spirit in order that it might witness of the things of Christ “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

### ***The Son as Author of Evangelism***

God the Son is the author of evangelism. Although “being in the form of God,” He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet, voluntarily “he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2: 6, 7), in order that He might accomplish the saving work which the Father had commissioned Him to do. At His coming into the world He said: “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God” (Heb.10:7).

He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Thus dying the death of an accursed one, He redeemed from the curse of God such as had not continued in all things which are written in the book of the law (Gal. 3:10, 13). By so doing He brought into being the very heart of the gospel. As “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1: 29) He created the evangel.

He proclaimed the gospel through prophets of old in anticipation of His atoning death. They were but His mouthpieces. It was He who went and preached to Noah’s disobedient contemporaries when the longsuffering of God waited while the ark was being prepared (1 Peter 3:18-20). When holy men of old “prophesied of the grace that should come,” it was “the Spirit of Christ” within them which “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:10, 11).

In the days of His flesh, He proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God (Matt. 13), of the love of the heavenly Father for His wayward child (Luke 15:11-24), of “the Son of man,” the king, by appointment of the Ancient of days, of a universal and everlasting kingdom (Dan. 7:13, 14), who condescended “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10)—even publicans and sinners, the dregs of society. And, although He bade the twelve, whom He sent forth to preach the gospel, to restrict their evangelistic activity to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:6), He Himself brought the gospel to Samaritans (John 4).

Having died and risen again and thus ushered in a new dispensation, He charged His apostles and the church of all ages: “All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” And for their encouragement in the performance of so colossal a task He added: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:18-20).

It was the Son of God who, at the gate of Damascus, stopped Saul of Tarsus, turned him from a persecutor of the church into the greatest Christian missionary of all time, and said concerning him: “He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out. He worked mightily both in those who spoke and in those that heard. The disciples now received power to be Christ’s witnesses throughout the world (Acts 1:8). And of those who heard, some three thousand were converted and baptized. It was the Son of God who had merited the Spirit for the church and now poured Him out upon the church. Said Peter in his Pentecostal sermon: “Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

Every preacher of the gospel today speaks in Christ’s name; rather, Christ preaches through him as his ambassador. All evangelists can say with Paul: “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

Truly, “the Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of the faith, a church chosen to everlasting life” (*The Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord’s Day XXI, Answer 54).

In conclusion, let it be stressed that the Son of God not merely stands at the head of that class of men who are known as missionaries or evangelists, but that as missionary or evangelist, He is in a class entirely by himself. He is incomparable. He created the gospel. He Himself is the central theme of the gospel. In the final analysis, He is the one and only preacher of the gospel. He applies the gospel efficaciously by the Holy Spirit. And He Himself has no need of the gospel. All that can be said of the Son of God alone.

### ***The Holy Spirit as Author of Evangelism***

God the Holy Spirit is the author of evangelism. When holy men of old foretold the birth, the ministry, the death, and the resurrection of the Savior and committed their prophecies to writing, so that the Old Testament as well as the New is gospel, they were “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

*At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered a little band of insignificant, ignorant, and feeble, but believing, men and women to undertake the stupendous task of conquering the world for Christ, their Lord. The power of the Spirit was appropriately symbolized by two of the greatest forces of nature—wind and fire. That power, let it be remembered, has never departed from the church and never will depart, for the Spirit was given, said Christ, “that he may abide with you forever” (John 14:16). A second Pentecost is unthinkable. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is as unique and once-for-all an event as was the incarnation of the Son of God.*

*Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church became a witnessing church. Not only was cowardly Peter converted into a courageous preacher, every disciple became an evangelist. “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).*

There were present men “out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5), both “Jews and proselytes” (Acts 2:10). Through the operation of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, some three thousand of them were converted. These were received by baptism into the Christian church, as the first-fruits of the bountiful harvest that was to be gathered into the church in centuries to come out of “every kindred and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

*The Holy Spirit calls evangelists to their work and guides them in its performance.* In the apostolic age, He called and guided them by special revelations. To the church at Antioch in Syria, “The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2). And Luke relates that Paul and his helpers “were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia” and that “the Spirit suffered them not” to go into Bithynia, but by a supernatural vision directed them to Macedonia (Acts 16: 6-9). Now that special revelation is complete in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the manner of the Spirit’s calling and leading is different; yet they are not a whit less real. He calls and leads by divine providence and by His gracious influence on the minds and hearts of those whom He would have sow the seed of the gospel and bring in the harvest. Jesus commanded the seventy, whom He sent into every city and place which He planned to visit: “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:1, 2). “Now the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17).

*The Holy Spirit opens doors for the spread of the gospel.* By a marvelous providence He guided Paul to Rome, the capital of the pagan world, where, though a prisoner, he preached the kingdom of God and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ “with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31). In consequence, members even of Caesar’s household were brought to faith in Christ (Phil 4:22). Those who proclaim the gospel may be bound, and often are, “but the Word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:9) because the Spirit of God cannot be bound. And “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Prov. 21:1). By His Spirit, God often bends the wills of His bitterest foes to do His bidding so that the wrath of man is made to praise him (Ps. 76:10).

*As the Spirit of truth, the third person of the Holy Trinity preserves the gospel.* But for *this* activity of His, the gospel would long ago have been lost. The church itself would have destroyed it. The history of the church is replete with corruptions and rejections of the evangel. But the Spirit, who was poured out upon it at Pentecost, was to abide with it and in it for ever (John 14:16). For that reason, and only for that reason, has the church continued, and will it continue, as “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). To the end of time, there will be a body of true believers proclaiming the true evangel.

Of the many who received the gospel as proclaimed by Peter at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost not one *was* converted by the apostle’s eloquence. Nor was anyone converted by the exercise of his own unregenerate will. Everyone that received the Word did so because of the operation within him of the irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit. Likewise at Philippi Lydia gave heed to the things spoken by Paul only because the Lord opened her heart (Acts 16:14). He did it by the working of His Spirit. In all history, every true convert to Christianity was converted by the regenerating grace of the Spirit of God and the efficacious application of the evangel by the same Spirit. “No one can say that Jesus is the Lord, *but* by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12: 3). Here, too, the divine dictum applies: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zech. 4:6).

**The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the author both of salvation and of the gospel of salvation. He is indeed the author of evangelism.**

*Edited and excerpted from R. B. Kuiper, God-Centered Evangelism (Baker, 1961; Banner of Truth, 1966, 1978). For copies of this excellent book on evangelism, please contact Banner of Truth Trust.*

