

an essay:

ON THE TRIANGLE OF CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM

Robert Baral
11/19/2006 AD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. THE GEOMETRY OF SALVATION - THE EVANGELISM TRIANGLE

III. EXAMPLE # 1 - ACTS 8: SAINT PHILLIP AND THE ETHEOPIAN EUNICH

IV. EXAMPLE # 2 - ACTS 9: ANANIAS AND SAUL WHO BECAME SAINT PAUL

V. EXAMPLE # 3 - ACTS 10: ST. PETER AND THE ROMAN SOLDIER CORNELIUS

VI. IN CONCLUSION

VII. REFERENCES

NOTE

All Bible verses are in The King James Version.

I. INTRODUCTION

Our Lord declares to us The Great Commission in MATTHEW 28:18-20, “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, lo, I am with you always[s], even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Our Lord’s Great Commission commands all Christians to the work of evangelism to the lost and suffering, wherever and whenever he may find them. The conversion of a man’s heart, soul and mind unto salvation in The Saviour is the province of The HOLY SPIRIT. But it is the joyful duty of we who are called by His Name as Christians to preach The Gospel as witnesses to our unsaved neighbours. But what is needful for Christians to best obey our Lord’s Great Commission Command?

II. THE GEOMETRY OF SALVATION - THE EVANGELISM TRIANGLE

Christian evangelism may be seen in its structure through geometry as an equilateral triangle. In our model, we may picture at the top angle our loving Father in Heaven Who desires that no man perish in his sins, but that all come to Him in salvation at The Cross. At one of the base angles may be pictured the willing worker who does the work of the evangelist. And at the other base angle may be pictured the seeking sinner who, aware of his sin that separates him from The Almighty, desires to be reconciled to our Heavenly Father and whose heart, soul and mind have been made hungry for and ready to receive The Gospel of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Holy Scripture provides us with three stirring examples of such evangelistic triangle events: In ACTS 8 we have Saint Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch who was pondering the meaning of ISAIAH as he rode by in his chariot. In ACTS 9 we have Ananias and the conversion of Saul who became Saint Paul. And in ACTS 10 we have Saint Peter and the seeking Roman soldier Cornelius. In each case, we have the three parts needful for the process of evangelism: willing workers to share The Gospel with obedient presence, faithful proclamation and loving persuasion. In each case, we have seeking sinners who, their hearts, minds and souls having been prepared by The HOLY SPIRIT, are actively desiring the Word of GOD unto their salvation. And in each case, above, over and through both the willing works and seeking sinners is our loving Father in Heaven, calling His servants to reach out with His love and saving grace to the unconverted.

III. EXAMPLE # 1 - ACTS 8: SAINT PHILLIP AND THE ETHEOPIAN EUNICH

ACTS 8: Here we have our first evangelism triangle event involving Saint Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The Almighty directed Saint Phillip directly, for we read in verse 26, “And The Angel of The Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” And Scripture reports in the next verse that Saint Phillip, the willing worker in this case, obeyed GOD’s Command, for “he arose and went.” Now our seeking sinner appears on the scene, as verse 27 records, “behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,” This righteous man’s hunger for communion with The Creator is confirmed in that, not only as a gentile that he had come to David’s City to

worship The LORD, but that as we read next in verse 28, he “was returning, and sitting in his chariot... [reading ISAIAH] the prophet.”

Again The Almighty directs Saint Phillip, for we read in verse 29, “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Obeying GOD as His willing worker, Phillip approaches the man and calls out to him, inquiring if he understood The Scripture he was reading. The Ethiopian – our seeking sinner - replies in verse 31, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” And so he takes Phillip up into his chariot to sit with him. Verse 32-33 tells us that the man was reading from ISAIAH 53, quoting the text of the prophet from verse 7a-8, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken.”

The Ethiopian shows again he is a seeking and earnest sinner, for he asks Phillip in verse 34, “...I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?” Then did Saint Phillip declare The Gospel of our Lord JESUS CHRIST as The One of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke of in this passage. The result of this evangelistic triangle event is the salvation of the Ethiopian, for as they passed a body of water, he asked Phillip to be baptized in his faith in JESUS The CHRIST. So we read in verse 37-38, “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” And Though we read in verse 39 that “...when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more...” the Ethiopian – a seeking sinner now baptized and saved into The Kingdom of GOD by faith in JESUS The Messiah – “...went on his way rejoicing!”

IV. EXAMPLE # 2 - ACTS 9: ANANIAS AND SAUL WHO BECAME SAINT PAUL

ACTS 9: Here we have our second evangelism triangle event involving Ananias and Saul who became Saint Paul. Saul had gone to the High Priest in Jerusalem for a letter of authority to pursue the Christians in Damascus, as verse 1-3a says, “...Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus:” Saul is certainly not yet a seeking sinner, but here we see once again Our loving Father in Heaven intervening directly to touch a man’s hardened heart! For verse 3b-4 records, “...and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Imagine the sheer overwhelming fear and trembling sent by GOD into this man’s life, that he might be saved!

Now while the Ethiopian eunuch was already seeking The Lord with an earnest heart, the proud and haughty Saul required directly a visible and audible theophany of The Almighty to get his attention, for nothing less than this terrible event apparently would prepare his heart for salvation in JESUS! For verse 5-6 completes this encounter

between The risen and glorified CHRIST and the humbled and awestruck Saul, “And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest... And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” And so Saul went on to Damascus, lead there by the hand, blinded as a helpless child. O LORD, how the great and haughty do fall before Thy presence! There we are told in verse 9, “And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”

Now Saul, having been brought by GOD’s grace into the state of a seeking sinner, we next look for our willing worker. We are told in verse 10, “And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.” Recall how Isaiah the prophet responded in ISIAIH 6:8 when he heard the very voice of The Almighty saying to him, “...Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” Isaiah cried out in obedient reply, “...Here am I; send me!” So in ACTS 9:11-12 re are informed of the instructions given to Ananias in a vision, “And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.”

Ah, but Ananias is not yet quite the willing worker to evangelize Saul, for he was well aware of the persecution and blood that Saul had, in the authority of the High Priest in Jerusalem, brought upon the heads of the saints of The Church! For he argued with and questioned his marching orders from The Creator of The Universe, answering in verse 13, “...Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy Name.” It may not be quite fair sport to compare Ananias at this point – the called but still unwilling worker – with Saint Phillip in ACTS 8. For Phillip was given the much easier assignment of preaching The Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, a righteous man who was with his heart already worshipping The LORD and seeking communion with Him.

But as must all men, when commanded by The Almighty Who alone knows His Own Divine will for His saints, we next read that Ananias obeys – but only after The LORD consented to explained His reasons to Ananias. And so we read in verse 15-16, “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake.” Now we have the third angle of our triangle, the at last willing worker Ananias, who obeyed The Almighty. So we read in verse 17, “And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

And what was the blessed result of all this? Praise GOD, for Saul received back his sight immediately, arose up from his fasting and praying, was filled with The HOLY

SPIRIT, and was baptized into The Kingdom of GOD under The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST! So Saul dwelt with the disciples in Damascus, and as verse 20 reports, “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” And all were amazed, saying in verse 21, “...Is not this he that destroyed them which called on This Name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?” But GOD is sovereign, and His will be done on earth as in Heaven, for verse 22 reports, “But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very CHRIST [The Messiah]!”

See what works of GOD are not infrequently required for the salvation of men’s soul and sanctification of their lives! Were it not for the grace of GOD, and His astounding direct and miraculous intervention in the lives of both Ananias and Saul, The Church would never have had its Saint Paul! EPHESIANS 2:8 says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” We are all saved by Divine grace, but some men with more difficulty than others. By the grace of our loving Father in Heaven, and by His direct Divine intervention, and through the reluctant but eventually willing worker Ananias, this most offensive persecutor of The Church – Saul - became the humbled seeking sinner who we know reverently as Saint Paul!

V. EXAMPLE # 3 - ACTS 10: ST. PETER AND THE ROMAN SOLDIER CORNELIUS

ACTS 10: Here we have our third evangelism triangle event involving Saint Peter and the Roman soldier Cornelius. We begin with a GOD-fearing gentile, a Roman Army centurion of the Italian band. Verse 2 tells us of this seeking sinner, for he was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always[s].” Therefore our loving Father in Heaven sent Cornelius a miraculous vision, both visual and auditory, for we read on in verse 3-4 that Cornelius “...saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before GOD.”

Here Scripture reports this was an angel sent from The Almighty. Cornelius was instructed to send some of his soldiers to a nearby town and seek for Saint Peter, our willing worker. Therefore the Roman centurion, our seeking sinner, obeyed the angel of GOD. See here this man was already seeking for The Creator, to know Him and worship Him. It was not necessary for GOD to strike him down with His Own Divine hand to humble him, for Cornelius was already humble in heart before The King of The Universe. JAMES 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of The Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

Therefore a mere angelic visitor was sufficient for Cornelius to obey GOD. Some men believe upon hearing The Word of GOD; others require miracles; others still require angelic visitations; and yet others need to be shaken to their knees in beholding as it were the very face of GOD. Saint Thomas believed when he was permitted to place his hands in the very wounds of our risen Lord. But as we read in JOHN 20:29, “JESUS saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!”

Now Saint Peter, though now a devout Disciple of CHRIST, was not yet the willing worker in this case. For Peter was a devout Jew, believing that salvation in JESUS CHRIST was only for the house of Israel and not to be squandered on gentiles. What Peter needed to be made a vessel of obedience unto GOD here was an auditory and visual vision, which is exactly what The Almighty sent upon him as he prayed, that he might be made ready when the soldiers of the gentile Cornelius arrived to call him. Therefore as Peter prayed, we read in verse 10-13, “And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.”

Now these were animals which Jewish law forbid a religious man from eating, that it might defile him. Nor would observant Jews associate themselves in any way with unclean gentiles, for they held that they alone were loved of GOD and they alone were holy unto The LORD. Therefore Peter replied, not once, but three times to The Creator, The King of The Universe as in verse 14-16, “...Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.” Even so, it required The Almighty to speak to Peter once again to move him to obedience, for verse 17-20 tells us, “...while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius... stood before the gate... While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.”

Now we have Saint Peter the willing worker. He hears the call from the soldiers sent from Cornelius. He called them into his house and gave them lodging. And the next day, he went with them to the house of Cornelius the GOD-fearing gentile seeking sinner. There Cornelius had assembled his entire household, awaiting in obedience to The Almighty the arrival of Saint Peter. Now Peter was not yet aware of why GOD had called him to the home of this Roman centurion, for he tells Cornelius in verse 28-29, “...Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?” Though we do not always know what GOD intends for us, we are called to obey. For DEUTERONOMY 13:4 commands us, “Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him.”

See the confession of Saint Peter in verse 34-35, “...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.” Now Peter begins to preach The blessed Gospel to the Jews and gentiles there assembled – of His words, his miracles and healings, His cruel death and resurrection from the dead on the third day, His appearing to a multitude

of witnesses. Peter explained from The [Old Testament] Scriptures how, in all these things, JESUS is The CHRIST Who alone fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. For we read in verse 42-43 that Peter preached how CHRIST "...commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

And the glorious fruit of this blessed triangle of evangelism here – the intervention of our loving Father in Heaven, the humble seeking of the GOD-fearing Cornelius, the eventual obedience of Peter the Jewish believer in CHRIST – now comes to full blossom! For in verse 44-46 we see that, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard The Word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God!" Therefore the multitude of gentile believers – Cornelius, his household and the assembled gentiles – believed and confessed JESUS as The CHRIST and were baptized in water. Thus we read Peter's words in verse 47, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Note that Peter, after he and the believing Jews with him saw these works of The HOLY SPIRIT, commands the baptism in water of the believing gentiles, and – in so doing – began the expansion of salvation in The Gospel beyond the nation of Israel to the very ends of the earth! For The Almighty declares in ISAIAH 45:22-23, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am GOD, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself, The Word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear!"

VI. IN CONCLUSION

And as The Creator began - through His Covenant nation of Israel - the proclamation of His saving grace to the world of men, now that work continues through His holy Church. We began with our Lord's Great Commission command, which in LUKE 16:15-16 reads, "...Go ye into all the world, and preach The Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." What then is needful to successful Christian evangelism? As noted, the conversion of a man's heart, soul and mind unto salvation is the work of The HOLY SPIRIT. But it is the duty of all Christians, where ever and when ever we find the lost and the hurting in the daily course of our lives, to obey our Lord's Great Commission command.

The geometry of evangelism may be pictured as an equilateral triangle, in which our loving Father in Heaven as at the top angle. At one base angle is the willing worker, while at the other base angle is the seeking sinner. For The Almighty declares His desire that all men should come to salvation, as in EZEKIEL 18:23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" All is under GOD's Providence and all men are called to obey The LORD. Some men are more willing as workers than others. And many men are less seeking sinners than they should be. All men need the grace of The Almighty to be both.

So we saw in ACTS 8 Phillip the willing worker and the Ethiopian eunuch the seeking sinner. And in ACTS 9 we saw Ananias the at first reluctant willing worker and Saul who became Saint Paul, the at first haughty and most unseeking sinner. And in ACTS 10 we saw the at first self righteous worker Saint Peter who faithfully preached The Word to the GOD-fearing soldier Cornelius and his household.

Saint Paul – the once haughty and bloody Saul we met in ACTS 9, records in ROMANS 5 that we who are saved, “...being justified by faith, ...have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God!” Therefore let us pray to our loving Father in Heaven, that we may be His willing workers, so that we may testify of His saving grace at The Cross of CHRIST to all men, that seeking sinners prepared by His HOLY SPIRIT may be saved! Who will turn from his sins, confess CHRIST JESUS as The Messiah and live? This we are not given to always know, nor are we to speculate. Our duty is to proclaim The Gospel as faithful witnesses, trusting that GOD will prepare men according to His will. Let us know this: that The Almighty calls all men in His love, that all men might be seeking sinners saved at The Cross of CHRIST JESUS, and that we all may then become willing workers to bring the testimony of The Gospel to the very ends of the earth!

VII. REFERENCES

“King James Version Bible.” Bible Works 6 [computer program].” Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.