

EVANGELISE | PART 1 OF 2 | HOPE CHAPEL

THE FIRE THAT NEVER WENT OUT

God's Mission from Genesis to the Church
Pastor Andrew Cole | Sunday 19 July 2026 | 9AM Gawler

Big Idea: *Evangelism is not a modern program or optional add-on. It was birthed in the heart of God before Israel had a name, a temple, or a Bible. A fire God lit - and never allowed to go out. Our role today is to keep it burning.*

Introduction - The Altar Fire

Leviticus 6:12–13 *The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously. It must not go out.*

In the tabernacle, God gave Israel one strange, relentless instruction about the altar of sacrifice. The fire was never, ever to go out. So insistent was God about this that the command is stated twice in a single breath - it must not go out.

Every morning, before anything else happened in the camp, a priest walked out at the break of dawn and fed that fire. God lit it. They were commissioned to keep it alight. Not because the fire was mystical or magical, but because it represented something that was never allowed to grow cold - a people who existed to meet God and to be a light to everyone around them.

Centuries later, that image still has something to say to us.

Where Did Evangelism Begin?

If you ask most people where evangelism began, they might point to a famous revival - Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, the Welsh revival, Smith Wigglesworth, Billy Graham, a missionary movement, a church growth program. But evangelism didn't begin with a strategy. It was birthed in the heart of God. Long before his people had a name, a temple, or a Bible to carry.

Over these two messages, we are tracing a single fire through the whole of Scripture - one that has never been allowed to go out, no matter how dark the surrounding history became. If you want to understand why evangelism matters now, you first need to see that it was never optional.

Evangelism is not optional. It was the plan from the very first promise, and it has been burning ever since.

1 | Evangelism Began with God, Not with Us

Long before Israel had a king, a temple, or a law, God spoke a promise to one man that had the whole world in view. Abraham was likely a pagan moon worshipper from Ur when God pulled him out of everything familiar with a single sentence that changed the shape of history.

Genesis 12:2–3 *I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*

God did not bless Abraham so Abraham could keep the blessing to himself. The blessing did not terminate with Abraham. He blessed him so the blessing could travel through him to the ends of the earth. That promise is still standing.

The Gospel Preached in Advance

Paul looked back at this exact moment and called it something extraordinary. Not just a promise - he called it a sermon. A gospel sermon preached 2,000 years before Bethlehem.

Galatians 3:8 *Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham.*

Scripture foresaw it. The word of God foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith - and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham. Before the law. Before the prophets. Before the manger. Before the cross. God was already preaching the gospel to a man standing in a field with no Bible, no church, and no idea what a Saviour was.

This is how the early fire was lit. It was there before Sinai, before the prophets, before the manger and before the cross.

A Nation of Priests

Exodus 19:5–6 *You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

A priest exists to represent God to people and people to God. Israel's calling was never to hoard the knowledge of God for itself. It was to be a nation of priests standing between a watching world and the living God.

Isaiah 49:6 *I will also make you a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*

Israel didn't always live this out. But God's intention never wavered for a single generation. Evangelism is not a modern add-on stitched onto the gospel. It is the gospel's oldest tendency - older than the nation of Israel itself. It was there before it all.

Reflect: *The blessing God gave you was never meant to terminate with you. Has it been sitting with you, or travelling through you? What would it look like to let it move?*

2 | Evangelism Was Lived and Commanded by Jesus

When Jesus stepped into human history, he did not simply teach a message about seeking the lost. He lived it. With his sleeves rolled up, he crossed every line his culture told him not to cross. A Samaritan woman at a well, a tax collector up a tree, a woman caught in shame, a leper no one would touch.

The Word That Changed Andrew

Andrew shared that a single scripture changed him from accepting his own salvation and sitting in it, to understanding it was never just for him. For years he was in church, receiving, grateful - but something was missing. Until God highlighted this:

Matthew 9:36 *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Compassion. Not obligation. Not frustration. A gut-level heartache for people who were lost and didn't even know it. And when Jesus stood before 5,000 people who were hungry - both for food and for him - the Bible says he had compassion on them. That compassion is the birthplace of a miracle. When we start to have compassion, when our heart changes, when we start to see people differently - that is the very catalyst for the miraculous.

It wasn't frustration. It wasn't obligation. It was compassion.

Luke 19:10 *For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.*

Everything about his ministry - the miracles, the meals, the parables - served that one purpose. And before he returned to the Father, he did not leave us with a private, exclusive faith to polish and protect. He left us with a mission to carry into every corner of the earth.

Matthew 28:19 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

Following Jesus is free - but it costs you your whole life. This was not a new idea Jesus invented on his way out the door. It was the fulfilment of everything Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah had pointed toward 2,000 years earlier.

John 20:21 *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*

The Great Commission is not a command bolted onto the gospel as an afterthought. It is the gospel's natural momentum, flowing directly out of the compassion of the one who came looking for us first. While we were still lost and didn't even know it - God searched for us, and found us.

Reflect: *When did you last feel genuine compassion for someone who was lost? Not obligation, not fear, not strategy - but a gut-level heartache for someone harassed and helpless? Ask God to give you that compassion for your one name this week.*

3 | Evangelism Became the DNA of the Early Church

Acts 1:8 *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

The Spirit was not given simply to make believers feel close to God - though that does happen too. He was given to make ordinary people into witnesses. The result was explosive. Three thousand added in a single day. Then daily growth. Then a movement that no empire could contain.

Acts 2:47 *And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

It Wasn't Just the Apostles

Who was doing the telling? It must have been just the apostles, right? Let's see what Scripture actually says:

Acts 8:4 *Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.*

Not only the apostles standing on platforms. When persecution scattered the church of Jerusalem, it was ordinary believers - tradesmen, assistants, mothers, servants, the recently saved, people who barely knew how to read a Bible but just knew something had changed in them - who carried the message with them wherever they landed.

Suffering couldn't extinguish this fire. It spread. Like embers carried on a wind into dry fields. Within a generation, churches were planted from Jerusalem to Rome. The Roman Empire owned the world - it decimated everything that stood in its way. Yet this fire kept burning through it all. And it is still burning today.

Our role today is to keep the fire burning. Get up at the break of dawn and stoke it. Not out of obligation - out of compassion.

The One Name - An Honest Update

Andrew shared honestly about his two names from the start of the Romans series. One is elderly and unlikely to ever come to church - Andrew is meeting him at 2pm today and plans to lay it out clearly, because he knows it's time. The other is someone he doesn't really want

to sit with - but he's having coffee with them this week, carrying fear, but also carrying the compassion God placed in him.

Evangelism does not always go to the comfortable place. It goes to the compassionate place. It is the fire that never went out - not because the people carrying it were fearless, but because God kept lighting it back up.

Reflect: *Who is your one name? Have you been praying? Has there been any contact, any interaction, any open door? Andrew wants to hear testimonies. Bring them next week.*

Reflection & Discussion Questions

Use these on your own during the week, or with your LifeGroup.

1. Galatians 3:8 says the gospel was 'announced in advance to Abraham' - 2,000 years before Bethlehem. Does it change how you see evangelism to know it started that early, in the heart of God, not in a human strategy?
2. The blessing to Abraham was never meant to terminate with Abraham - it was meant to travel through him to all nations. Is the blessing you have received travelling through you, or has it stopped?
3. Andrew said the verse that changed him was Matthew 9:36 - when Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion. When did you last feel that kind of gut-level heartache for someone who was lost and didn't know it? What did it produce in you?
4. Acts 8:4 says ordinary scattered believers - not just apostles - preached the word wherever they went. What is your equivalent of being scattered - your workplace, your neighbourhood, your sporting club? Are you carrying the word there?
5. Andrew said evangelism is not optional - it was the plan from the very first promise. How does that land for you? Is there something in you that still treats it as an add-on? What would need to change?
6. He described having fear about sitting with his second name, but doing it out of compassion. Is there someone God has put on your heart that you have been avoiding out of fear? What is one step you could take this week?

Key Scriptures This Week

- Leviticus 6:12-13 - The fire on the altar must never go out
- Genesis 12:2-3 - All peoples on earth will be blessed through you
- Galatians 3:8 - The gospel announced in advance to Abraham
- Exodus 19:5-6 - A kingdom of priests and a holy nation
- Isaiah 49:6 - A light for the nations; salvation to the ends of the earth
- Matthew 9:36 - He saw the crowds and had compassion
- Luke 19:10 - The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost

- Matthew 28:19 - Go and make disciples of all nations
- John 20:21 - As the Father sent me, I am sending you
- Acts 1:8 - Power when the Holy Spirit comes; you will be my witnesses
- Acts 8:4 - Those scattered preached the word wherever they went

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