

Bethel Christian Church
In God Alone

Study 1

Eve & Father's Gift of Life

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'In God Alone' is a series of studies on the life and the testimony of God seen in ten Old Testament characters and three New. I intentionally use the term 'the testimony of God' rather than the testimony **about** God shared by these characters. The difference is huge. God doesn't bring information about himself, he brings himself.

God Reveals Himself

The revelation of God has always been God revealing himself not humanity valiantly striving to find him. We cherish the illusion that if given the right breaks and a little information and time we can discover the truth of God. For several reasons many maintain that this illusion is true.

- It seems to be what happens. By the mercy of God at work in our hearts prior to conversion it seems like we are the ones first seeking him.
- Because we are constantly attempting to justify ourselves, working out myriads of ways of pleasing God through moral/religious duties of some description, it seems on the surface that we are the ones doing the work.
- It also seems to make the failure of some to ever see the truth God's failure to communicate the truth.

How did Jesus see it? "*No one comes to me lest the Father calls him.*" "*My Father is working and so I work*" was the reality behind the faith through which Jesus related to humanity. This 'presumption' of Jesus concerning his Father's activity is replaced in sinful humanity by the presumption that we may decide when and how and what we believe.

Rightly understood the lives we will examine in this series show that every aspect of covenant communion with God is God's doing. He is the one who can and does take responsibility for establishing and keeping us with him.

God reveals Himself - Always through the way of the Cross

For Luther humanity finds itself in either one of two great streams. One he called the way of 'glory' and the other the way of the cross. The way of glory is essentially humanity's search for and approach to God under its own terms and will power. It presumes that it has the freedom and the desire to search after God and find him. The way of the cross on the other hand sees sinful humanity as bound and alienated, the slave of its sin. There it remains until God frees the heart from the bondage and pollution of sin. Hence the way of 'glory' is the way of all religions. Ultimately, however brilliant it is it is the way of no glory.

The way of the cross is the way of grace alone through God reconciling himself to us in Christ. In the cross the action that frees the will from a deadening conscience is accomplished and we were participants in that liberating event. If our gospel does not comprehend the actual bondage of guilt and how that guilt is demolished then we will always be on a 'glory' trail, Christian or not. Adam and Eve knew instantly that their sin had caused what Satan said it wouldn't. They died towards God. Instead of the life of communion they were afraid and hid from the source of their life.

It would be true to say that these two great streams mark every generation of the history of humanity from Eve until now. They are prominent in the life of the Church

in all ages and therefore we should not be surprised to find the battle lines drawn in Bethel around these issues.

One thing we must see in God's interaction with the characters of our studies is that it never falls into such a neat definable way which enables us to turn it into a nice ethical framework for living. The Church has been plagued by attempts to do this.

Aware and distraught by their sins and weaknesses the great men and women of the Scriptures come, by the mercy and providence of God, to acknowledge that everything they are and have become was by God's hand. Even more importantly, their identity and significance in God's salvation history came from the relationship He established with them and his promises accomplished through them. This is what the Scripture is about: The plan and purpose of God to reveal his glory. It is not about individual spirituality.

Very few were what we popularly imagine to be 'saints'. In their number we find killers, terribly weak people, adulterers, schemers and hard headed rebels. That God blessed such ones in no way excuses any of their behaviour but simply points to the reality that they were called to bear witness to God's grace not their own so called strengths. We should find no comfort in these great people being weak any more that we find our own sins and weaknesses a comfort. The amazing grace we will see in the way God came to them and blessed them should remind us that through his Covenant care even our very weaknesses cause and convince us to look solely to God for mercy and ministry. He is our comfort. In God alone we can stand, walk and leap for the joy of it.

Why Start with Eve?

For one mentioned so little in the Scriptures she is perhaps the most recognised woman in ancient and western history. Her seduction by the Serpent is legendary in all forms of art and literature. The results of her seduction have born inestimable horror. But do we see the shadow of Christ falling across the tragedy in the Garden? Can we get a whiff of the grace to come as sin pressed into this first human family? Confronted by the terror of death, the couple became recipients of grace. They become the first recipients of the grace eternally planned. It would take God Himself to undo the entail of the lie they embraced. Only God's Son in the flesh could enter that perverse and polluted world and reverse the impact of the lie Eve believed. But then His ministry was designed to embrace all the generations of man, including the two where it all began.

The Birth of Eve

We make fun in a semi embarrassed way about Adam and Eve. Spare ribs, apples and fig leaves seem to make the scene homely and innocently simple. However, the way God created and established the first couple is stunning in its beauty and poignant in its creativity. Little wonder that Jesus, the true man and true Bridegroom went back to this couple to open the depths of maleness, femaleness, marriage and family.

God fashioned Adam from the earth, something for which Adam never seemed resentful. Rightly understood to be part of the earth is a noble and promising thing. Then God made a startling statement

"It is not good for man to live alone

This is either a monumental 'oops' moment or something else. Was God, having a second look at Adam, suddenly aware that there was a huge deficiency in what he had done? Was this statement evidence of God creating on the trot? Or was it simply a

statement affirming something far more profound about the man he had made? Was it the outworking of what he had previously said, *“Let us make man (male and female) in our image”*.

The principle was clear when God created Adam. What God had always known (living in the Triune community of love) but now saw in the context of life within his new creation was that is not good (functional) for a human to be alone, an isolate, a ‘single’. If Adam is to be a human being in God’s image he has to be a human being in community with another. Solitude contradicts the essential nature and calling of God and therefore humanity. Eve became Adam’s true life and being in community. Adam became Eve’s true life and being in community.

According to the way God had structured him Adam could only discover himself and his destiny in free and joyful communion with Eve. Eve could find who she was in the delight of Adam welcoming her into communion with him.

God as the primary community of love had always shared, deliberated, given and received within free and joyful communion. Now the ones he had made to bear his image began to discover the height, length, depth and breadth of being like God.

The communion between Adam and Eve was God sharing his deepest joy with human beings. This was God saying “This is how to live.” “This is how to live like me.” “This is how to love like me”

What a phenomenal gift Eve was to Adam. Self sufficiency was and is death. Solitude is anti all he was made for. We note next study that Eve’s temptation was to stand alone from Adam and God. This was death.

So when God took Eve from Adam’s side he gave Adam more than just another person. She was not a foreign thing to Adam. She was part of him, derived from him. Their communion was not abstract. They found congruence at every point of intimacy. Their lives did not come together like two strangers based upon mutual contracts. They were one flesh and so able to be truly one with each other

She derived her glory from Adam and he derived his identity from her as Father’s gift But Eve was not just the gift of sex and warm cuddles. She was Adam’s bride. But where did the notion of a bride and groom come from? Not from Eden but the mysteries of the depths of God’s Bride and Groom. So as Eve came to Adam and they freely and joyfully became one the world was given the first sight of God and his Bride. Eve is the good news of God to Adam that something wonderfully rich is being worked out in history by God. Something much bigger than two people in a garden. Adam may not have been able to compute all the riches which lay ahead in the Son making himself a Bride to seal her within the holy Triune community. But when they shared in the ‘being-with’ I suspect they knew in their bellies that this was the shadow of God wed to his newly minted creatures. It was their marriage then that sent them forward into the mystery of something rich and eternal. So their ‘being-with’ was holy and good and prophetic.

All this and so much more flowed into the creation when God brought Eve from within the side of Adam and gave her to him.

Surrounded by so much blessing how could Eve be deceived?