

The First Woman of Faith



Any biblical study of “Women of Faith” must not exclude the first woman of faith, namely Eve. Admittedly, when we talk about men and women of faith, it is so easy to overlook Adam and Eve. Many (including Christians) blame Adam and Eve for their fall into sin. After all, does not the Bible teach us in Romans 5:12 that “as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin”?

Undoubtedly, death came as a result of Adam’s sin, precipitated by Eve’s being deceived by the Tempter (cf. 1 Timothy 2:14). The moment sin entered into the picture (via Adam’s one disobedient act, he being the federal head of the human race), what was originally created as “very good” by God has since been turned into a cursed arena of “thorns and thistles”

(Genesis 3:18), subject to the bondage of corruption and mingled with infirmities and death. The universal prevalence of death and suffering is, tragically, part of the “package” of consequences which comes with Adam’s fall. Little surprise that some Christians even went as far as to suggest that Adam and Eve were not saved! On the contrary, there is strong inferential evidence that Adam and Eve are saved – by faith, of course!

Evidence of Unseen Things through God’s Word

Faith, as the Bible tells us, “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The Greek word translated as “substance” is a compound word consisting of the prefix “*hupo*” (which

means “under”) and a noun form of the root verb “*histemi*” (meaning “cause to stand”). It gives the idea of “an undergirding support” which gives confidence. The Greek noun translated as “evidence” is closely associated with the verb “*elegcho*”, which tells of “making manifest hidden things”. Both are derived from the root verb “*lego*”, which means “to say”. In other words, the utterance of words is involved here! Interestingly, this Greek verb “*lego*” usually refers not to the mere form or sound of words, but specifically to the content and connected sense of the words uttered. Clearly, God’s manifestation of unseen things (as revealed through His Word, of course!) gives the undergirding support of our faith.

The Christian faith is not a blind faith. It is a reasonable faith, not a mindless “blind leap of faith” apart from God’s Word. Neither is it a mystical faith that thrives on superstition and rituals. It does not bypass the mind or discard the reasoning and thinking process. Rather, saving faith is that “spiritual enlightenment” of the mind based on a clear knowledge of God’s Word. And we notice that Adam and Eve did exhibit this kind of saving faith after the Fall. (Since the theme concerns “women of faith”, this article shall focus on Eve, yet with relevant reference to Adam, inevitably.)

Eve’s Belief in the First Good News

It is instructive to note Eve’s interesting response upon giving birth to her firstborn son. When her first child was born, she literally

exclaimed, “I have gotten a man from the LORD” (Genesis 4:1b)! This exuberant utterance seemed to spring forth from a sense of praise and triumph, which is strong inferential proof that Eve believed in the truthfulness of God’s promise given together with the pronouncement of the curse on the serpent in Genesis 3:15 – “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Theologians call this the “protevangelium”, a combination of 2 Greek words – “*protos*” (which means “first”) and “*euaggelion*” (meaning “good news”). It literally means “the first good news”, for in God’s solemn pronouncement, we heard for the very first time, the Gospel of mankind’s salvation!

Two things would have gripped and preoccupied Eve’s thinking since then – the “Seed of the woman” that would come, and the “bruising” of the serpent’s head by “her seed”. You could say, Eve fixed her whole soul to that divine promise, hence the name “Cain” for her first son. The name “Cain” comes from the Hebrew root word (*qanah*) which means “acquire”, and is obviously derived from Eve’s joyful exclamation of acquiring a man-child!

Eve was certainly thankful for obtaining (through the birth process) a man-child and must have secretly hoped that this man-child would grow up to be the promised “Seed” that would one day “bruise” the serpent’s head, though in the process, He would be “bruised” in the heel. While the latter is not a mortal wound (implying

a short-lived victory for the serpent), it is nonetheless going to be a vigorous “bruising” or “wounding”. The same root verb is used for both the “bruising” inflicted by the woman’s Seed and the serpent, but with a slight difference. The action by the serpent has an added suffix attached to the verb (what is known as “energetic nun” in Hebrew grammar), employed for added emphasis – thereby depicting repeated and vicious attempts at destroying this “Seed of the woman”, but all in vain because it is only to the “heel”. The woman’s Seed, on the other hand (according to God’s fullness of time), needed just one decisive “hit” to deliver a capital blow – for it is to the “head” – which shows He is more powerful than the serpent! Eve certainly did put her faith in God’s promised Deliverer; but alas, Cain turned out to be the first in the long line of “the serpent’s seed” instead! Poor Eve! She must have felt so disillusioned and heartbroken at how her first son turned out.

Notwithstanding this, all those actions / reactions of hers point to her as one who had faith in God and His Word. Prior to the Fall, Eve had been maliciously taken out and beguiled by the subtle serpent; her gullibility and thus vulnerability to deception were the result of her failure to take heed of God’s Word literally (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3). Since the Fall, she knew better than to question God’s Word; she believed literally what God had said concerning a future Deliverer. Eve had real faith – faith that “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

Biblical Significance of Eve’s Name

This brings us to the name Adam gave to his wife. After the Fall, Adam felt moved and found it a necessity to give his wife a name. Remember, Adam had that mandate from God (given in Genesis 2:19b) that “whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof”, including the wife God gave him. And Adam would not give frivolous, flippant names. After all that had transpired, resulting in the Fall and culminating in God’s pronouncements of curses, one would expect Adam to give his wife a sad, unflattering name. But instead, we find in Genesis 3:20 that Adam called her “*Chavvah*”, a name that is closely associated with the Hebrew word (*chayah*) which means “to give life”. Hence, this gives rise to the English transliteration “E-V-E”. (A good clue to its original pronunciation is to enunciate each of the vowel sound as well).

Now, in the midst of all the tragic consequences that had been pronounced, Adam realised that God had not left them without hope. Something momentous must have been reverberating in his thoughts. To him, the most important message was in Genesis 3:15. He clung to that one gleam of hope which God had revealed in the midst of all the gloom and doom. A future “Seed of the woman” was promised that would come to deal a crushing blow to the serpent’s head. With hindsight and fuller revelation from the New Testament, we now know “that old serpent” is none other than “the Devil, ... Satan” (Revelation

12:9). And the phrase “it shall bruise thy head” is pregnant with meaning – it means ultimate deliverance from the tyranny of Satan and sin is assured! Perhaps in Adam’s thinking (given the limited revelation he had), together with that would be their restoration to Paradise, which he and his wife had enjoyed freely with God before the Fall.

This so stirred up great hope in Adam. He showed faith in God’s promise by believing that God would give them children, and that through this means (of childbearing), the promised “Seed” / Deliverer would ultimately come to bring salvation. Therefore, he saw in his wife not death, but life. So he aptly named her “*Chavvah*”, for she would literally be “the mother of all living”. Adam heard, understood and believed the first Gospel! He, like Eve, had faith, which “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”.

Saved through the Childbearing

Now that Eve and her husband had been thrust out of the garden of Eden into unfamiliar surroundings to face a cold, intimidating world (subject to the bondage of corruption and decay), Eve must have been full of regret (of what-might-have-been) and filled with a deep chastened feeling. But in the midst of her fallen world, she remembered God’s promise of hope for mankind. She now knew better than to doubt God’s Word, though she might not fully understand how it would all pan out.

Unfortunately, family tragedy struck when Cain killed Abel

(manifestation of the depravity of human nature due to the Fall) because of envy and hatred over his brother’s righteous works (cf. 1 John 3:12), thus disqualifying himself from being in the promised line. Although Eve’s excited hope of an immediate Deliverer was dashed, she continued clinging on to God’s promise of the “Seed of the woman”. She still believed that through this means of childbearing, the “Seed of the woman” would ultimately come, hence Paul’s commentary in 1 Timothy 2:15a, which can be literally translated from the Greek text as: “she shall be saved through the childbearing”. This indicates the channel through which God’s promised deliverance would reach Eve. It does not refer to childbearing in general, but (because of the presence of the definite article) to that particular childbearing event, namely that of the Incarnate Christ.

Though Eve was not so sure exactly when or who that Deliverer would be, she knew He must come through the appointed godly line. We see her faith and submission manifested in Genesis 4:25 in the birth of another son, in place of the slain Abel. She called his name “Seth”, which comes from the Hebrew word (*sheeth*) meaning “appoint”. Instead of saying, “I have gotten”, she now gave due honour to God by acknowledging that God “hath appointed”. And though it would be some 4,000 years before God’s promised Messiah arrived on the scene, Eve showed her faith in resolutely believing God’s promise, which is the “substance” of her hope and the “evidence” of things yet future to her. ■