

Genesis 3:1-15

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[0 : 00] Hello, good morning. Good morning. It's good to be back with you. In the UK, wet the accent. It's got to be a bit of an American scream. It's flying, so it's time to come back and wet the accent for a few weeks.

So nice to be with you again this week. And thanks to Paul and the elders again for the invitation to share God's word with you. If you have a Bible, please turn with me back to the passage that we read this morning and to Genesis chapter 3.

And we're going to focus this morning on Genesis chapter 3, verse 15. Genesis 3 and verse 15.

And as we come to think about God's word, let me pray for us again.

Father, in your light, we see light. And so we pray that you would come now and by your Holy Spirit, illuminate the reading and the preaching of your words so that we might see Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more dearly.

We ask this in his name, who lives and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever prays. Amen. Genesis 3, verse 15.

[1 : 14] Family trees.

Family trees. Family trees. We all have a family tree. Everyone here belongs to a family, to a line of descendants, to a family tree.

I don't know if you're interested much in your family tree, but I've become interested in mine in recent years. On my father's side, there's a long line of Ulster farmers from the north of Ireland. And a Scottish faith mission pilgrim, my great-grandmother Christina, came from Scotland, was a travelling evangelist to the north of Ireland, and then clearly distracted my great-grandpa James, an Ulster farmer who himself was an open-air preacher, and perhaps she thought she could teach him a bit about preaching.

My father's side reveals a long line of Christians over generations. On my mother's side, my great-grandpa George Roberts originated from Halkin in north Wales, before he moved to the Werrell near Liverpool.

[2 : 33] There were no signs of any Christian influence on his side of the family until later in his life. He had two sons with his first wife, Sarah, who then died in her late 20s.

And then he married a young Scottish woman called Margaret Ann Houston, a young Presbyterian lady. And together they had eight children, six boys and two girls.

My grandfather, Arthur, was one of those six boys. His mother, Margaret Ann Houston, this Scottish Presbyterian lady, was a divine Christian.

Each night she would read the Bible with her kids and pray for them after dinner. And as I've traced the lines of these eight children that she had, there are two or three lines from Margaret Ann Houston that reveal strong Christian families.

I like to think of my great-grandmother's prayers still having effect down from certain family trees all these years later.

[3 : 43] Looking at your family tree can be a really useful exercise because it can help you understand how you came to exist, how it is that you came to belong in your particular family.

It can also reveal some sadnesses and conflicts and fallouts in your family history, as well as graces and providences in the family line.

That's what I've seen in the family trees on both my father and mother's sides. I've seen graces and providences on the one hand, sadnesses and conflicts and fallouts on the other hand.

Which brings us to our passage this morning, and in particular Genesis 3, verse 15. What we have here is the first mention of family trees in the Bible.

We have the whole human race reduced down to two genealogies. Two family trees, stated in the most general of terms. There is the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman.
[4 : 54] And what we see in these two family trees is conflict and grace. Conflict and grace. We see the conflict at the heart of the human race.

We also see God's grace to the human race. The great conflict at the heart of the human race is obvious enough. It's stated in verse 15, right at the beginning.

I will put enmity between you and the woman. The word enmity here is emphatic in the Hebrew. And its presence is felt all the way through the verse.

The enmity begins with the serpent and the woman. Then it continues between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. And then it comes to a climax in the fight between the individual offspring of the woman and the serpent himself.

So we have two family trees. Two lines of descendants in conflict with each other. As I said earlier, looking at family trees can reveal sadnesses and conflicts.

[6 : 00] And here in these two family lines of the human race, we have the great conflict at the heart of the human race. What Cornelius Van Til called the antithesis.

The great antithesis. But there's something else present in this verse. There's not just conflict. There's also grace. God's great grace.

A grace that relates to you and me here this morning. Because if you're a Christian here this morning, then you belong to this family tree of the offspring of the woman.

And you belong to it because of God's grace. You belong to the family of God because of the grace of God. And this verse reveals that to us in three ways.

Number one, we belong to God's family because of his electing grace. We belong to God's family because of his electing grace.

[7 : 00] Look at the beginning of verse 15. I will put enmity between you and the woman. At first sight, it's hard to see where we get electing grace here from.

But just think about what has happened. God had made Adam and Eve as his own special covenant people. But instead of responding in faith and obedience to God, their father, they rebelled against him.

They chose to form an alliance with the serpent. The serpent tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit. And because they ate the forbidden fruit, they formed an alliance with the serpent.

They stood against God now with the serpent. Instead of living for God and fighting the serpent, they changed sides and began to live against God.

Boys and girls, you know what this is like. When you're playing a sports game in the park or at school, and the player on your team changes sides to go and play for the other team.

[8 : 03] They're no longer playing with you. They're now playing against you. Well, that's what Adam and Eve did. They changed sides. They started playing for the other team, the wrong team.

They started living for the serpent. They joined with team devil. Instead of staying on team God.

And when God came looking for them in the garden, after they had sinned, after they had switched sides, they didn't come out of the trees confessing their sins.

They came out excusing themselves and pointing the finger at others. Adam blamed his wife. She gave me the fruit.

The woman blamed the serpent. The serpent deceived me and gave me the fruit. And with this gleaming game, one thing became clear.

There was no repentance from them. They were still on the side of the serpent. The serpent still had control of them.

[9 : 09] But then look what God said to the serpent in verse 15. He said it to the serpent directly and to the first human pair indirectly.

I will put enmity between you and a woman. You see that? God promises to put conflict between the serpent and the woman.

Now think about it. She's on his side. So what's God doing? He's bringing her back onto his side. He's bringing her back onto God's side and against the serpent.

Eve, we might say, is the first elect member of the Christian church. God elects her by putting enmity between the serpent and her.

This is God's electing grace. Because just think about what God's doing. He's rescuing Eve from the serpent. He's rescuing Eve from herself in her sin.

[10:12] Here was a woman whose attitude only moments or days earlier was hostile to God. Her affections had shifted from God, from loving God to hating God.

Yet here is God now putting enmity between her and the serpent. Which means that he must be changing her attitude towards God. He must be renewing her affections for God.

In short, God must be giving her a new heart, a new mind. And God does it not because she asks him to. God does it because of his grace.

She's been making excuses when he confronted her with her sin. Even in her opportunities to repent, she's still hiding behind her sin. Yet here is God giving her something she doesn't deserve. The only thing this woman deserves is to be judged alongside the serpent. But God acts in grace. He elects her back into his family. He gives her what she does not deserve.

[11:18] A new beginning. A new heart. A new mind. That's what grace is. Receiving a gift you do not deserve. Boys and girls, this is a really helpful definition of grace.

You hear that big Bible word used all the time. What is it? What is it? It is receiving a gift you do not deserve. Mercy is not receiving a punishment you deserve.

Not receiving a punishment you deserve. But grace is receiving a gift you do not deserve. And Eve does not deserve to be brought back onto team God.

She deserves to be judged on team devil. But here is God electing her back onto his team. It's the same for us.

If we are in God's family this morning. If we are on God's side. Then we need to realize that the only reason we belong to God's family. Is because of his electing grace.

[12:23] Is the only reason we have a positive attitude towards God this morning. The only reason we have any desire for God this morning. The only reason we can sing some of the songs we've sung this morning.

Is because God has chosen to put enmity between us and the devil. Because God chose to renew our affections to him.

Because God chose to elect us onto his team. And why did he do that? Well just like with Eve. Not because of who we are. Or what we have done. But because of who he is.

God of grace. We were children of wrath. Haters of God. Lovers of self. Jesus even spoke about people being offspring of the devil.

You are like your father the devil. He said to the Pharisees. He was referring back to Genesis 3.15. We were like that. Yet God chose us.

[13:24] I think in Christian circles God's grace can become so ordinary. So common. So expected. We hear about God's love and grace every week in our home groups.

On the Lord's Day. And so we just expect God to be gracious to us. Isn't that the business that he's in? He has to be gracious to us. Well no.

He doesn't have to be gracious to us. He chooses to be gracious to us. To give us something we do not deserve. And if you're here this morning and you're a Christian.

Then you have received his electing grace. And that is extraordinary. Not ordinary. That is uncommon. Not common.

That is surprising. That is surprising. It's unexpected. We're going to sing at the end of this service. A lovely hymn by Robert Murray.

[14:21] He puts it like this. Chosen not for good in me. Waken up from wrath to flee. Teach me Lord on earth to show by my love how much I owe.

Chosen not for good in me. If we're Christians here this morning. Then we belong to God's family because of his electing grace.

Second, we belong to God's family because of his preserving grace. His preserving grace. Look at the second part of verse 15.

I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. Now there is some question as to what the offspring of the serpent are.

Who they are. Some people say that since the offspring of the women are real descendants. From her family line. So the offspring of the serpent must be some kind of real descendant from the serpent.

[15:24] Some scholars say that they're real snakes. Think about in the wilderness. Snakes came and attacked God's people in the wilderness. Others say that it must just be evil spirits.

I think the offspring of the serpent certainly includes evil spirits. But the fact is that later in the Bible certain people are associated with the devil. Like Cain is likened to the devil.

Or Saul or Judas. Or even as I mentioned Jesus says to the Pharisees. You are like your father the devil. In other words you're the offspring of the serpent.

So the Bible speaks not just of evil spirits being the offspring of the serpent. But actually people being the offspring of the serpent.

Who take on his image. Who act like him in their lives. And God promises that the enmity will continue between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman.

[16:25] Now what does that continued enmity between the two offsprings reveal? It reveals preserving grace.

Preserving grace. Just like the enmity that God sovereignly put between the serpent and the woman reveals electing grace. So the continued enmity between their respective offsprings reveals God's preserving grace.

Because just think about it. If the enmity is going to continue between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. Then that means God must continue to preserve and elect offspring of the woman.

He must continue to put enmity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent. What we have here in this second part of the judgment of the serpent is God's preserving grace.

He promises to preserve a people for himself. Down through the centuries. Down through the generations. Who will fight against the offspring of the serpent.

[17:37] Who will have affections for God. Who will be on his team. Not the devil's team. And as you read the Bible, isn't that what you see? You boys and girls, you'll know some of these stories.

Just think of Israel and Egypt. When Pharaoh tried to kill all the newborn sons. Had Pharaoh been successful, he would have wiped out the offspring of the woman.

The offspring of the serpent would have crushed the offspring of the woman. Or just think about when Assyria and Babylon came and attacked Israel and Judah.

Had they been successful and wiped out both nations, then the offspring of the serpent would have crushed the offspring of the woman. Would have annihilated them.

Or think about King Ahasuerus and Haman's plot to wipe out the Jews in the book of Esther. Had they been successful, the Jews dispersed across the Persian Empire would have been extinguished.

[18:38] The offspring of the serpent would have triumphed over the offspring of the woman. Yet at every attempt by the offspring of the serpent to wipe out the offspring of the woman, what did God do?

He intervened and preserved a people for himself. He continued to choose people. He continued to ensure that there was enmity between them and the offspring of the serpent down through the centuries.

He raised up Moses from within Pharaoh's own house to fight against Pharaoh and rescue Israel from the Egyptians. He preserved a remnant of people in the exile to ensure that King Jehoiachin was released from prison and set at the king's table in Babylon.

Later he stirred up the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to send his people back home from exile. God raised up Esther to save the Jews from Haman's plot to wipe them out.

God's preserving grace runs like a golden thread through the pages of biblical history all the way down to us here today.

[19:51] If we are Christians this morning, then we belong to God's family by his preserving grace. As I mentioned at the beginning, I've become interested in researching my family history.

And as I've done so, I find sadnesses and conflicts and fallouts. But I also find God's electing, preserving grace running like a golden thread through my family.

On my father's side, I come from four plus generations of faithful Christians. On my mother's side, in my ancestral line, there is a child born out of wedlock.

It is called an extra-marital affair between a married man and a young single lady called Nellie Wallace from the Shefflin Islands. Nellie became pregnant in the early 1900s.

She later gave birth to a little baby girl called Frances Maud. And she took her to Glasgow and gave her up into a foster home.

[20 : 59] home. Frances Maud was taken in by a foster family in Carlisle who very sadly had an abusive alcoholic mother who was very unkind to Frances Maud. Frances Maud grew up in very difficult circumstances, lots of conflict, lots of fallout, and it wasn't until her late 20s that she met a young man called Arthur Roberts, the son of Margaret Ann Houston, that Scottish Presbyterian woman I told you about earlier. They married in 1935. In their first two years of marriage, Arthur and Frances had two premature boys. Neil was born at six months, he lived 55 minutes.

A year later, Arthur John was born. At six months, he lived nine hours. Year after year, Frances would have miscarriages, never able to hold a child beyond six months. But eight years into their marriage, they had a boy called Alan Houston Roberts. You can see what Arthur was doing, naming his son after this woman, Margaret Ann Houston, after his mother. After Alan, they had many more years of infertility and more miscarriages, until at 44 years of age, Frances fell pregnant with a little girl. Evelyn Margaret Roberts. Again, notice her middle name, Margaret, after this grandmother, Margaret Ann Houston, the woman of faith in Arthur's family.

Evelyn grew up in a non-Christian home. Arthur and Frances were not Christians. But one day, when she was reading her school Bible, her prayer book at the World Grammar School for Girls, she was converted on a sports field. And then started taking her mother, Frances Maud, to church with her, who was later converted. Evelyn grew up, married a man from Ulster, and together they had three sons. And when Evelyn had her third son, her mother said to her, you have the three boys I've always wanted. Remember Neil, who died six months, Arthur John died at six months, and then she had Alan, who lived into his 40s. That's my family history on my mother's side. I am one of those three boys that Evelyn and Margaret had. That's my mother, Evelyn and Margaret. My family history on my mother's side is full of sadness and conflict and fallout. But it's also full of grief. There's sadness with the deaths of Neil and Arthur John, these little boys who lived for six months, sorry, four and six months lived just a matter of minutes and hours. There's conflict between my grandmother and her abusive foster mother. But there's also grace. The grace of the Margaret Ann Huston and her prayers that were heard for my mother and her mother. Yes, there are sadnesses and conflicts and crises, but there's also grace woven into my family like a golden thread. And I'm here today as a Christian because of God's grace. Think about it. You read that family history, how did you become a Christian? How did it happen? That God would step in and convert a young girl on a sports field. And I would encourage you to think about your family history. If you take time to think through where you've come from, you'll see sadness and conflicts. You'll see sadness and conflicts. But if you're a Christian, you'll see grace running through your family like a golden thread. Or you'll see grace interrupting your family history and bringing you to faith perhaps as the first Christian in your family line of unbelievers. I mean, just think about why you are here today as a Christian. It's all because of God's electing and preserving grace.

God's grace. We belong to God's grace. We belong to God's family because of His saving grace. That's the last part of verse 15. Cast your eye down there. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. The enmity between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman comes to a climax in a final battle. Between an individual offspring of the woman. Notice it's a he, not a they.

[26 : 38] The offspring of the offspring of the woman gets narrowed down to an individual person. He will bruise your head. And notice he doesn't fight the offspring of the serpent. He fights the serpent himself.

And notice how the order flips around. So far it's the, I will put enmity between you the serpent and the woman. Between your offspring and her offspring. And he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. Notice the last part flips around.

I think to show us that in the end of the serpent. The serpent. The serpent. Now there are a number of things we could learn about this representative individual in the line of the woman. But I just want to point out three this morning. Notice he will descend from a woman. Now that's so obvious, right? Offspring of the woman.

Well that's so obvious, right? Well that's actually surprising. Because it's the man who holds the power of begetting descendants. The seed required for descendants belongs to the man, not the woman. But notice how this son, this individual will descend from a woman without any reference to a man. There's no mention of Adam here.

This individual will descend from a woman without any reference to a man. Now in order for the woman to have any offspring, Adam would obviously need to be involved. But notice there's no

mention of him. The focus is on this representative individual coming from the woman. What we have here I think is the faintest echoes of the virgin birth. The person will descend from a woman with no reference to a woman.

[28 : 32] The second, he will be a son. The very fact that this person is a he who descends from a woman tells us that he will be a son. A son is going to come and fight the serpent. And all the way through the Bible, that's the controlling category for this person who is coming.

It's not prophet, it's not prophet, it's not priest, it's not king, it's not Messiah. The controlling category for the coming individual from the offspring of the woman is a son. A son is coming. Adam was called God's son. But he forfeited the right. So God promised another son.

Abraham was promised a son. Abraham was promised a son. Abraham was promised a son through whom he would be made into a great nation. David was promised a son through whom his kingdom would be established forever. All the way through the Bible we are waiting for a son to come.

a son who will come and fight the serpent on behalf of his people the offspring of the woman will be a son he will come from the offspring of the woman without any reference to his father he will be a son and third he will be a victorious but suffering son the offspring will bruise the serpent's head but the serpent will bruise his heel precisely because the serpent has been cursed to crawl on his belly all the days of his life it can only bite at the person's heel the curse in verse 14 ensures the victory in verse 15 the serpent from its humiliated position can only injure it cannot kill but for this upright man who is standing he has the immediate advantage and so he can stand on the serpent's head and crush him and since he will crush him the point is that he saves the offspring of the woman from the power of the serpent the offspring of the woman saves those people even though he himself becomes injured in the fight it's as if as he goes to crush the serpent in the head the serpent bites him in the heel here is God's saving grace

God provides a representative son who will descend from over him to fight and triumph over the serpent even though he himself is injured in the fight he will be a victorious but suffering son what's interesting is to trace the development of this verse through the whole bible Sinclair Ferguson put it well Genesis 3.15 is like the whole bible with the rest of the old testament as a footnote so boys and girls if you ever want to summarize the whole bible just quote Genesis 3.15 and just say to your parents the rest of the bible is a footnote Genesis 3.15 because what's interesting is you trace this promise through the bible what you see is that God gets victory over his enemies often with a blow to the head Joshua captures the five Aborite kings and gets his commanders to lie on the ground and then they stand on their necks before he hangs them on the trees

[32 : 09] Deborah and Barak fight for Israel against Sisera the representative of the king of Hazor who eventually gets a tent peg where?

in the head also in Judges of Emelech gets a millstone to the head think about David boys and girls where did David throw the stone that killed Goliath?

did it hit him in the knee? no it hit him in the head it was a blow to the head David was a mini Messiah the son of God fighting the representative arch enemy of his people Goliath and he killed him with a blow to the head in other words as the Old Testament develops you see that God saves his people through a chosen representative who defeats their enemies often by inflicting a deadly blow to the head all of these fights are miniature dramas of Genesis 3.15 each of them pointing forward to that ultimate fight between the representative of offspring of the woman and the serpent these were only little skirmishes in biblical history waiting for the great battle between this son and the serpent and it's in the Gospels that this fight comes to its fulfillment in the life death resurrection of Jesus Christ just think about when Jesus was born what did King Herod try to do to him try to kill him during his temptations what did Satan try to do he came to fight him in the wilderness and tempt him just think about during his ministry the Pharisees and the scribes opposed him and tried to plot to kill him later on

Satan entered Judas Iscariot who then betrayed Jesus which led to his trial and crucifixion Satan the serpent went to war against Jesus the son he tried to strike him in the heel he tried to bite him and at first sight the strike looked like it was a deadly one Jesus hangs on a cross dead he lies in a tomb dead it seems like the serpent has triumphed over the offspring of the woman but when Jesus dies notice who is standing near the cross watching you know how the gospel writers talk about there were women standing by and it names them two women called Mary one of her was his mother and we Protestants get all very nervous at this point Mary's getting too close to the cross

you know get her away from the cross so Jesus is our savior

Mary's got nothing to do with it and that's true Mary doesn't save us in any way whatsoever but why is Mary mentioned as standing by the cross because on the cross is the offspring of the woman on the cross is the offspring of the woman it's interesting that in his first miracle Jesus refers to his mother as woman woman my time has not yet come he was alluding back to Genesis 3.15 and do you remember the place name where Jesus dies Golgotha the place of the skull and he shall crush your head first Adam failed to crush the serpent by a tree and lost his bride Jesus crushes the serpent on a tree and saves his bride he kneels the serpent to the tree puts it in a grave and he did it for all of us if we trust in the Lord

[36 : 15] Jesus this is the gospel of grace Jesus the representative son fought on our behalf crushed the devil it cost him his life he has the scars to prove it just like any man who's ever bitten by a snake has scars to prove it Jesus has the scars to prove that he went into battle with the devil he did it to save us this is God's saving grace this is the third reason why we belong to God's family because of his saving grace while we were still sinners while we were still enemies Jesus died for us while we were on Satan's team Jesus died for us to bring us back onto God's team God sent his son to fight the devil and bring us back onto his team this is the great good news of God's great grace grace the question we each need to ask ourselves this morning is have we experienced this electing preserving saving grace so let me ask you which family tree do you belong to which family are you in the offspring of the serpent or the offspring of the woman you may say well I don't belong to either family tree whose are viable family trees that's all very interesting do you know what I mean but not that interested myself well listen to Jesus if you are not for me you are against me if we're not on God's side this morning then we need to know that we are on the side of the serpent whether we like it or not whether we agree with it or not whether we believe it or not it doesn't change reality the reality is we are in one of these two family trees and Jesus says if you're against me you're in the serpent the serpent's family tree you're in the offspring of the serpent but if you are for me then you have received my electing preserving and saving grace if we are

Christians here this morning if we've repented of our sin put our faith in the Lord Jesus then we are united by faith to that son the son of the woman the victorious but suffering son who crushed the serpent and if we belong to him then it is all by God's grace we've sung it this morning already what a mystery I see what a miracle has joined me to this life that never ends let us pray a dream