

Back to the Beginning Session 15 Review and Summary

The Curse After the Fall

We're in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve have fallen, and now God is speaking judgment.

First to the serpent:

“Because you have done this, cursed are you more than any of the cattle, and more than every beast of the field, on your belly you will go and dust you will eat all the days of your life.”

Then verse 15:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

There is an immediate, literal sense to that. Snakes strike at our lower extremities, and if we are going to destroy them, we crush the head. But it also points forward. In the larger sense, Christ crushes Satan's head. Satan wounds, but it is not a fatal wound for those whom Christ saves. He is active, but he is on a leash.

Then God speaks to the woman:

“I will greatly multiply your pain in conception; in pain you will bear children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.”

That phrase, “your desire will be for your husband,” is not describing romance. It is part of the penalty. In Genesis 4:7, God tells Cain that sin's desire is for him, but he must rule over it. The structure is the same. The desire is not neutral; it carries a negative pull.

Before the fall, the woman was given as a helper, a support. I've used the illustration of a stepladder with two sides that stand opposite each other, yet together provide stability. Even in a healthy marriage there is natural opposition. A husband may suggest something and the wife may raise practical concerns. That tension is not wrong. But sin introduces strain into what was meant to be supportive. Now the desire can become a pushing against rightful leadership.

The man is responsible to lead—not as a dictator and not as a boss, but as the one God placed in charge of the home. After the fall, what was meant to be a complementary relationship now carries friction.

The Ground Is Cursed

To Adam God says:

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you will eat of it all the days of your life.”

Listening here means more than simply hearing. It carries the idea of obeying. He followed her into disobedience.

The curse falls on the ground itself:

“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field.”

Before the fall, Adam was placed in the garden to tend it and keep it. Work was already part of his calling, but it was not burdensome in the way it would become. After the fall, the same task would now be marked by resistance. The ground would not cooperate in the same way. Thorns and thistles would complicate what once was straightforward, and bread would come only through sweat and strain.

I’ve felt that in my own garden. I’ve pulled up a corn sprout by mistake, carefully replanted it, watered it, and watched it wither anyway. Meanwhile, a weed I tossed aside would lie on the soil and somehow find enough contact with the ground to thrive. There is something stubborn in the curse. God was not exaggerating.

Then comes the blunt statement:

“By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

We are familiar with those words, especially at funerals, but they should still strike us. We were formed from dust, and we return to dust. That is part of the curse. Death is not natural in the sense of being original; it is the result of sin.

Eve, the Mother of All Living

Verse 20 says:

“Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.”

At that point, how many people were alive? Two. There had been no children yet.

That naming reflects faith. In the midst of judgment and curse, Adam believes that life will continue. The woman who handed him the fruit and was involved in the fall will also be the mother of all future generations. There is something hopeful in that act. He is trusting that God’s promise of ongoing life will come true.

God Provides a Covering

Verse 21:

“Then Yahweh God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.”

Why not simply allow them to keep the fig leaves they had made?

The leaves would not last. More importantly, an animal had to die. Blood was shed. God Himself provided the covering.

Adam and Eve sensed their shame and attempted to cover themselves. God did not dismiss that instinct as unnecessary. Instead, He affirmed the need for covering but replaced their inadequate solution with one of His own. Man does not secure his own salvation. God provides the sacrifice.

This sets the pattern for the rest of Scripture. The cost of sin is life, and God supplies what is required.

Driven Out of the Garden

Verse 22:

“Behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever—”

So God sends them out of the garden. Cherubim and a flaming sword guard the way to the tree of life.

It would not have been good for Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of life in their fallen condition. To live forever in sin, sickness, and decay would have been a dreadful existence. The expulsion from the garden is judgment, but it is also mercy.

Adam and the Second Adam

From here we turn to Romans 5, because the New Testament picks up this story and calls Christ the second Adam.

Romans 5:12 says:

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—”

Through one man—Adam—sin entered the human race. Sin existed before in Satan, but it was not in humanity. Adam became the doorway through which sin and death entered.

At the end of the verse Paul says, “because all sinned.” That is not the same statement as Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned.” Here he is speaking in a representative sense, and he goes on to explain what he means.

Verse 13:

“For until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”

Between Adam and Moses, sin clearly existed. Cain killed Abel. Wickedness increased. The flood came. Yet Paul says sin was not imputed—meaning it was not charged to someone’s account in the same way—because there was no formal law like the one given through Moses.

Then verse 14:

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.”

Even though sin was not imputed in that formal sense, people still died. Death reigned. Why?

Because Adam acted as a representative head. He was not simply a private individual making a private choice. He stood at the head of the human race. When he disobeyed, he did so on behalf of all who would descend from him. His decision counted for his line.

We are born into that line. We are born sinners, not first because of our individual acts, but because we belong to Adam’s family and share in his rebellion.

Christ is the second Adam.

Just as Adam stood at the head of one humanity, Christ stands at the head of another. Adam’s disobedience brought condemnation and death to those connected to him. Christ’s obedience brings righteousness and life to those connected to Him.

In Adam, we are counted as sinners. In Christ, we are counted as righteous.

The movement from one to the other comes through trusting Christ. He regenerates, transfers us from Adam’s headship to His own, and gives us a new standing before God.

Paul’s argument in Romans 5 is legal and representative. It is foundational to understanding who we are by nature and who we become in Christ.