

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Doctrine of Humanity

Created, Fallen, and Redeemable — What It Means to Be Human Before God

UNIT 5

The Original State and the Covenant of Works

Lesson 16

The Probationary Test and the Freedom of Adam

Why the Tree, Why the Test, and What Was at Stake

“The Fall Was Not Inevitable — Adam Sinned Against Every Advantage”

Key Texts: Genesis 2:16–17; 3:1–6; Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49; Ecclesiastes 7:29

“The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”

Genesis 2:16–17, NASB 1995

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Introduction

Lessons 14 and 15 have established the two foundations of Unit 5: Adam was created in genuine original righteousness (Lesson 14), and that righteous Adam was placed in a covenantal arrangement with God in which life was promised for obedience and death threatened for disobedience (Lesson 15). Lesson 16 examines the probationary test itself, the test at the center of the covenant of works, with the questions it raises and the theological significance it carries. Why did God test Adam at all? What was the character of Adam's freedom in the test? What resources did Adam have available to pass it? What specifically was at stake? And what does the test, and its failure, anticipate about the One who would succeed where Adam failed?

These questions matter not only for the understanding of the fall but for the understanding of the gospel. The probationary test is the context in which the Last Adam's obedience must be understood: the obedience of Jesus Christ is not an abstract virtue but the specific fulfillment of the specific probationary test that the first Adam was given and failed. When Romans 5:19 declares that "through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (NASB 1995), the obedience of "the One" is the obedience of the One who passed the test that Adam failed, who sustained in the wilderness and in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross the same trusting, God-honoring loyalty that Adam was given the opportunity to demonstrate in the garden of Eden and chose not to demonstrate. Every dimension of Christ's saving obedience is illuminated by the probationary framework that the covenant of works establishes, and the probationary test of Adam is therefore not merely a historical curiosity but the theological context within which the gospel's specific content can be most precisely understood.

This lesson proceeds in six sections. We begin with the purpose of the probationary test: why God gave the test, what it was designed to accomplish, and why its design was gracious rather than manipulative. We then examine the nature of Adam's freedom in the test, defending the genuine freedom and genuine capability of the pre-fall Adam against both deterministic interpretations (the fall was inevitable) and over-optimistic interpretations (the test was trivial). The third section examines the sufficiency of Adam's resources: the intellectual, moral, and relational equipment the pre-fall Adam had available for the test. The fourth section examines the stakes of the test: what Adam was reaching for in obedience and what he lost in disobedience, for himself and for his entire posterity. The fifth section reads Genesis 3:1–6 as the narrative account of the test's failure, attending to the specific character of the serpent's temptation and Adam's capitulation. We close with the Christological conclusion: the Last Adam's obedience as the test's successful completion, and the imputation of that completion to all who are in Him by faith.

A note on the relationship between Lesson 16 and the Hamartiology material that follows in later units: this lesson treats the probationary test primarily from the perspective of what it was and what Adam had available to pass it, rather than from the perspective of the nature, the transmission, and the consequences of original sin. The full doctrine of the fall, the act of transgression, the imputation of guilt, the inheritance of corrupted nature, the bondage of the will, belongs to the Hamartiology series that this curriculum will address in future installments. Lesson 16 focuses on the test itself: its purpose, its character, and its anticipation of Christ, rather than on the comprehensive doctrine of sin that the test's failure generated.

I. Why the Test? The Purpose of the Probationary Arrangement

The Test Was Not a Trap but a Gracious Opportunity for Freely Chosen Covenant Faithfulness

A. *The Gracious Character of the Probationary Design*

The question of why God tested Adam at all is a theological question of some depth, and it has been answered in ways that range from the philosophically sophisticated to the pastorally profound. The most common inadequate answer is that God did not know what Adam would do, a position that compromises divine omniscience and has rightly been rejected by the Reformed tradition. The most common superficially adequate answer is that God wanted to test Adam's obedience, an answer that is true as far as it goes but does not explain why the test was necessary or what it was designed to accomplish beyond the bare determination of what Adam's choice would be. The Reformed tradition at its best has given a richer and more theologically satisfying account: the probationary test was a gracious provision, designed not to trap or to test in the sense of ascertaining an unknown outcome, but to provide the creature with the specific opportunity to express in free, deliberate, covenant-conscious obedience the love and the trust toward the Creator that was already the natural inclination of the pre-fall will.

The key insight is that the probationary test was designed to move Adam from the integrity of the original state to the confirmation of the eschatological state, from *posse non peccare* (able not to sin) to *non posse peccare* (unable to sin), through the free exercise of the creature's genuine loyalty to the Creator. A righteousness that is merely given by creation without the opportunity for its free expression and confirmation is a righteousness that has not been personally appropriated, that belongs to the creature as a constitutional endowment rather than as a personally embraced orientation. The probationary test provided the occasion for Adam's original righteousness to be personally expressed, personally confirmed, and personally ratified in an act of free, deliberate, covenant-conscious obedience that would move him from the constitutional righteousness of the creation to the personally confirmed righteousness of the eschatological state. The test was not God's way of finding out what Adam would do; it was God's gracious provision for the escalation of the creature's goodness from constitutional to confirmed.

This account of the test's gracious purpose illuminates the specific character of the prohibition. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not chosen because it was in itself dangerous or harmful; it was chosen as the specific vehicle of the test because its prohibition gave the creature a concrete, visible, tangible occasion to express the trusting obedience that was the proper response to the Creator's authority and generosity. The simplicity of the prohibition, one restriction in a garden of abundance, was itself part of the gracious design: the test was not oppressive in its difficulty but clear in its simplicity. Adam was not placed before an ambiguous ethical dilemma; he was given a single, unambiguous command from a Creator who had given him everything else, and whose authority over the one restricted tree was the specific locus of the trusting obedience the test was designed to confirm. The test was the opportunity for a single, free, uncomplicated act of covenant loyalty in a context of extraordinary divine generosity.

B. *Trust, Love, and the Relational Dimension of the Test*

The relational dimension of the probationary test is perhaps the most pastorally illuminating dimension, and it is the dimension that the serpent's strategy in Genesis 3 most directly attacks. The test was not primarily a test of Adam's rational capacity (though it engaged his reason), or a test of his willpower (though it engaged his will), or a test of his behavioral compliance (though it required a specific behavior). It was, at its deepest level, a test of Adam's trust in and love for his Creator. The God who had given Adam the garden, the vocation, the companionship, the very good creation, and the promise of eschatological blessedness had now placed before Adam a single restriction that required nothing more than the trust that God's word about the tree was true and that God's authority over the tree was legitimate. The prohibition "you shall not eat from it" was, at its deepest level, an invitation to trust: to trust that God's word could be relied on without verification, that God's authority

did not need to be tested, and that the creature's own assessment of what was good and desirable was not the standard by which the Creator's command should be evaluated.

Calvin's insight in the Institutes (II.1.4) is particularly illuminating here: the essence of Adam's sin was not the eating of the fruit per se but the rejection of the principle that the creature's good consists in submission to the Creator's word. Calvin writes: "For as Adam's acceptance of the prohibition clearly indicated that obedience was the beginning and foundation of righteousness for man, so by Adam's transgression the principle was established that disobedience is the source of all evils." The probationary test was, in Calvin's account, the test of whether Adam would maintain the principle of creaturely subordination to the Creator's word, whether he would accept the Creator's definition of good and evil rather than claiming the right to define those categories for himself. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the occasion for Adam to either trust the Creator's assessment of what was good for him or to assert his own autonomous judgment. The test was simple in form and profound in substance: it was the test of whether the creature would live as a creature, dependent, trusting, receptive, or whether it would grasp at a godlike self-determination that was not its to claim.

The Trinitarian dimension of the test's relational character deepens its theological significance. The God whose word was being trusted or distrusted in the probationary test is the triune God of eternal self-giving love, the God in whose image Adam was made and whose inner life is a community of perfect mutual trust and self-giving between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The probationary test was, in a profound sense, an invitation for the image-bearing creature to reflect in creaturely form the Trinitarian trust and self-giving that the Creator's own inner life expresses: to trust the Father's word, to rest in the Creator's provision, to live as a creature who receives everything from the One who gives everything and who holds nothing back. The fall was therefore not merely a legal infraction; it was the rupture of a relational pattern that reflected the Trinitarian life of God Himself.

"Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices."

Ecclesiastes 7:29, NASB 1995

II. The Nature of Adam's Freedom: Genuinely Able to Obey

The Fall Was Not Inevitable, Adam Was Neither Determined to Sin Nor Incapable of Obedience

A. Against Determinism: The Fall Was Not Inevitable

The most theologically serious objection to the culpability of Adam's fall is the argument from divine sovereignty: if God is sovereign over all things, including the specific choices of free creatures, then was not the fall inevitable from the moment of creation? And if it was inevitable, can Adam be held genuinely responsible for what he could not have avoided? This objection, in its various forms, has been raised from the Pelagians (who concluded from it that Adam's fall cannot have been divinely foreordained) to the hyper-Calvinist tradition (which has sometimes drawn the opposite conclusion, that the fall was a necessary expression of the divine decree). The mainstream Reformed tradition has consistently refused both conclusions, affirming simultaneously the full sovereignty of God over all things and the genuine freedom and genuine culpability of Adam's choice, on the ground that divine sovereignty and genuine creaturely freedom are not incompatible but mutually presupposing.

The Reformed tradition's handling of the relationship between divine sovereignty and the fall is carefully nuanced: God sovereignly decreed to permit the fall (rather than to actively cause it) in such a way that Adam's choice was genuinely his own, genuinely free, and genuinely culpable. The Westminster Confession's careful language is instructive: "God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to

the will of the creatures” (WCF 3.1). The fall was ordained in the sense that God decreed to permit it; it was not ordained in the sense that God compelled it or caused it. Adam’s will was not overridden by the divine decree; his fall was the genuine expression of his own genuinely free choice, made without any external compulsion, against the orientation of his own created will, and therefore fully and unambiguously his own responsibility.

Ecclesiastes 7:29’s testimony is the most direct biblical statement against the determinism that would make the fall inevitable: “God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.” The “but” is the hinge of the entire verse, the word that marks the contrast between what God made and what the creature did with what God made. God made men upright; the many devices are the creature’s own initiative, the creature’s own contribution to the history it has lived. The fall is not the expression of what God made but the contradiction of what God made: it is the creature’s free departure from the genuine uprightness of the original creation, and the full weight of the “but” is the measure of the creature’s responsibility. The fall was the creature’s catastrophe, not the Creator’s design.

B. *Against Trivialization: The Test Was Demanding in Its Stakes Even If Simple in Its Form*

The opposite error to determinism, the trivialization of the test as though it were so easy that Adam’s failure was incomprehensible, is equally to be guarded against. The test was simple in its form: one prohibition in a garden of abundance. But simple in form is not the same as trivial in substance or easy in execution. The test engaged the deepest aspects of Adam’s creaturely constitution: his trust in God’s word against the serpent’s counter-claim, his reliance on God’s assessment of what was good against the tree’s apparent desirability, and his submission to the Creator’s authority against the serpent’s invitation to autonomy. The test was demanding not in the complexity of what it required but in the depth of the orientation it presupposed: the creature who passed the test would have been displaying a trust, a love, and a covenant loyalty that engaged the whole of the creature’s relational and volitional constitution in a single decisive act.

The simplicity of the test is, in fact, precisely what makes its failure so inexcusable. If Adam had been tested in a complex ethical dilemma involving competing goods and ambiguous obligations, his failure might have been understandable as the error of a limited creature navigating a genuinely difficult situation. But the test was not complex: it was one clear command, in a context of overwhelming divine generosity, given by the Creator whose word was fully trustworthy and whose provision was fully adequate. The failure was not a mistake made under pressure of ambiguity; it was a clear choice against a clear command in a context of clear provision. This is precisely what makes the doctrine of original sin’s comprehensiveness both theologically necessary and morally coherent: a creature who had everything and was asked for very little, and who chose against the very little that was asked, has no excuse that diminishes the gravity of the choice.

The Augustinian tradition’s insistence that Adam’s fall was a genuine act of pride, the creature’s grasping for the independence and the self-definition that belonged to the Creator alone, captures the depth of what the test’s simplicity revealed. The serpent’s temptation in Genesis 3 did not offer Adam something that was genuinely missing from his already very good life; it offered him the illusion of a self-determination that exceeded the bounds of creaturely existence. “You will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5, NASB 1995): the temptation was not the promise of something better than what Adam had but the promise of something that was not Adam’s to have, the autonomous self-definition that belongs to the Creator rather than the creature. The test’s simplicity was the backdrop against which the depth of the fall’s pride appeared in its full theological nakedness.

III. The Sufficiency of Adam's Resources: Equipped for the Test

Adam Had Everything He Needed to Pass the Probationary Test

A. Intellectual, Moral, and Relational Sufficiency

One of the most important theological affirmations about the probationary test is that Adam was not set up to fail. The God who designed the test also equipped the tested creature with everything the test required, and the sufficiency of Adam's resources is a necessary component of the test's integrity as a genuine trial of covenant loyalty rather than a predetermined failure. The Westminster Larger Catechism (Q&A 17) captures this with characteristic precision: God endued man "with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it: and dominion over the creatures; yet subject to fall." Three dimensions of sufficiency are specified: intellectual ("knowledge", the capacity to understand the command), moral ("righteousness and true holiness", the capacity to obey the command without the distortion of sin), and volitional ("power to fulfil it", the genuine freedom to choose obedience).

Adam's intellectual sufficiency for the test is established by the Genesis 2 narrative itself: Adam was capable of the kind of rational, linguistic, and relational engagement with the world that the naming of the animals (Genesis 2:19–20) and the covenantal address of God's command (Genesis 2:16–17) presuppose. He understood what the command prohibited, he understood what the sanction threatened, and he had no cognitive impediment to the clear comprehension of what was being asked of him. The intellectual dimension of the test was not challenging in its complexity; Adam had the cognitive capacity to understand the command without ambiguity and to evaluate the serpent's counter-claim against the Creator's word with the full capacity of an unimpaired, unclouded original mind.

Adam's moral sufficiency is the most theologically significant dimension of his resources for the test, because it establishes that the test was not a set-up for failure by placing an unreasonable demand on a constitutionally incapable creature. The pre-fall Adam had the *posse non peccare*, the genuine ability not to sin, grounded in a will genuinely inclined toward God and genuinely capable of sustained obedience to the divine command. He was not constitutionally biased toward sin; he was constitutionally inclined toward good. The moral resources available to him in the test included the genuine orientation of his will toward God, the rightly ordered affections that were directed toward God as their primary object, and the true knowledge that gave him an accurate perception of God's goodness and trustworthiness. He was, in the fullest theological sense, morally equipped for the test. The fall was not the inevitable expression of a constitutional weakness; it was the free departure from a constitutional strength.

B. Relational Communion with God as the Context of the Test

The most profound dimension of Adam's sufficiency for the probationary test is the relational one: Adam was not asked to trust and obey the Creator in a relational vacuum but in the context of the direct, personal, immediate fellowship with God that the pre-fall garden embodied. The God who gave the command in Genesis 2:16–17 was not a remote, impersonal lawgiver whose authority Adam was required to acknowledge from a distance; He was the God who formed Adam with His own hands, breathed into him the breath of life, provided him with the garden and the vocation and the companion, and walked with him in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8, the implication of the pre-fall fellowship whose rupture the verse describes). Adam was asked to trust the word of a God whose generosity and goodness he had personally experienced in the most immediate and most relational way possible.

This relational context of the test magnifies both the sufficiency of Adam's resources and the inexcusability of his failure. A creature who trusted in and obeyed a God she had never experienced, never encountered, and never received generosity from would be exercising a more demanding and more abstract kind of faith. But Adam's trust in the Creator's word was a trust in a word spoken by the very God who had made him, provided for him, and established the covenantal relationship in which he lived. The basis for trust was as extensive and as personally

experienced as it could possibly be. The serpent's strategy in Genesis 3 attacks precisely this relational basis of trust: "Indeed, has God said ...?" (Genesis 3:1, NASB 1995) is not merely a challenge to the specific content of the divine command; it is an invitation to doubt the character of the God who gave the command, to entertain the suggestion that the Creator's prohibition was motivated by withholding rather than by generosity, by rivalry rather than by love, by fear of the creature's potential rather than by care for the creature's wellbeing.

The relational sufficiency of Adam's resources for the test also illuminates the nature of what the test was requiring. The test was not primarily a test of Adam's intellectual capacity or his willpower; it was a test of his relationship with God, specifically, whether the relationship was characterized by genuine trust (the creature receiving the Creator's word as the ground of its orientation) or by the kind of relational independence that the serpent offered as an alternative. The passing of the test would have been an act of relational faithfulness: the creature maintaining, in the face of an alternative, the trust and the dependence that was the proper creaturely expression of love for the Creator. The failure of the test was therefore not merely a moral failure but a relational one: the rupture of a genuine relationship by the creature's preference for the serpent's version of creaturely existence over the Creator's.

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden"?"

Genesis 3:1, NASB 1995

IV. What Was at Stake: The Stakes of the Probationary Test

Adam's Obedience Would Have Secured Confirmed Life for All His Posterity; His Disobedience Forfeited It

A. The Eschatological Stakes of Obedience

The stakes of the probationary test were not merely personal, the confirmation or the loss of Adam's own righteousness, but universal and eschatological. Because Adam stood as the federal head of the entire human race, the outcome of the test would determine the covenant standing of every human being who would ever descend from him by natural generation. Faithful obedience to the covenant of works' test would have confirmed Adam, and all his posterity in him, in the eschatological righteousness of the non posse peccare, the permanent, irreversible, confirmed state of covenant faithfulness that the probationary period was designed to achieve. Every member of the human family would have been born, not into the probationary state of posse non peccare et posse peccare, but into the confirmed state of those whose federal representative had passed the test on their behalf and secured the eschatological inheritance of the covenant's promise.

This eschatological dimension of the stakes illuminates the full measure of what the fall lost. When Adam failed the test, it was not merely his own personal righteousness that was forfeited; it was the eschatological inheritance of every human being who would ever live. Every person ever born was robbed, in Adam's failure, of the confirmed righteousness and the eschatological life that Adam's successful obedience would have secured. The depth of the tragedy is measured not merely by the immediate consequences of the fall, the expulsion from the garden, the curse on the ground, the introduction of death, but by the eschatological inheritance that the fall's success would have secured and that the fall's failure forfeited for every member of the human race. The probationary test was not Adam's personal spiritual exercise; it was the universal hinge of human destiny, the moment on which the entire eschatological future of the human family turned.

The parallel with the Last Adam's test deepens the understanding of what was at stake in the first Adam's test. When Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, was tested in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13) and in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–44; Luke 22:39–46) and on the cross, He was succeeding at precisely the test that the first Adam failed: trusting the Father's word against the adversary's counter-claim, resting in the Father's provision rather than grasping for autonomous self-definition, submitting to the Father's will rather than asserting His own. And the stakes of His test were equally universal and eschatological: His successful obedience would secure the eschatological righteousness and the eschatological life that Adam's failed obedience had forfeited, not for one man alone, but for all who are in Him by faith. The probationary test of the first Adam and the probationary obedience of the Last Adam are the two sides of the same covenantal coin, and the universal scope of the stakes connects them both.

B. *The Immediate Consequences of the Test's Failure: What Was Lost*

The immediate consequences of the probationary test's failure are described in Genesis 3 with the narrative vividness of the very good creation undone: the hiding from God whose fellowship had been the context of the test (Genesis 3:8), the blame-shifting that distorts the relational integrity the test was designed to confirm (vv. 12–13), the curse on the ground that turns the vice-regal vocation into painful toil (vv. 17–19), the introduction of the mortality that was the covenant's threatened sanction (v. 19: "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return"), and the expulsion from the garden that seals off the tree of life and marks the formal end of the probationary period and the commencement of the era of the covenant of grace (vv. 22–24). Each of these consequences is the specific undoing of a specific element of the original state: the hiding from God is the undoing of the direct divine fellowship; the blame-shifting is the undoing of the relational integrity; the cursed ground is the undoing of the flourishing vocation; the mortality is the undoing of the life that the covenant promised; and the expulsion from the garden is the undoing of the sacred space where the covenantal relationship was lived.

The immediate consequence that the Reformed tradition has most carefully analyzed is the spiritual death, the immediate rupture of the creature's fellowship with God that the fall produced. The hiding of Genesis 3:8, "The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden", is the narrative embodiment of the spiritual death that the covenant of works' sanction threatened and that the fall immediately produced. The creature who had lived in the context of direct divine fellowship now hides from the divine presence: not because God has become hostile, but because the creature's own transgression has produced in it the consciousness of guilt that makes the holy God's presence an occasion for fear rather than for joy. This is spiritual death in its immediate experiential form: the disruption of the creaturely fellowship with God that was the purpose of the original creation and the context of the probationary test. The creature who was made for the love and the knowledge and the worship of God now hides from the very One for whom it was made.

The consequences of the fall for the entire human posterity are the consequences that the doctrine of original sin will fully develop in later series: the imputation of Adam's guilt to all who were in him federally, the inheritance of the corrupted nature that the fall produced in Adam, the total depravity of every human faculty, and the universal condemnation and death that the federal representative's failure incurred for the entire race. Lesson 16 does not develop these consequences in full, reserving that treatment for the Hamartiology series; but it is important to note here that the universality of these consequences is grounded in the universality of the federal headship that made them possible: because Adam stood for all, all fell with Adam. Every member of the human race after Adam is born not into the probationary state of original righteousness but into the post-fall state of original sin, bearing the guilt and the corruption that Adam's failure incurred for the race he represented.

V. The Narrative of Failure: Genesis 3:1–6 and the Anatomy of the Fall

How the Serpent's Temptation Attacked the Relational Basis of the Probationary Test

A. *The Serpent's Strategy: Subverting Trust in the Creator's Word*

Genesis 3:1–6 is the most theologically dense narrative of moral failure in the entire biblical canon, the account of how the probationary test was lost, analyzed with a precision of psychological and theological detail that illuminates both the specific character of the temptation and the specific mechanism of the fall. The narrative opens with the description of the serpent as “more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made” (v. 1a, NASB 1995), and the first move of the serpent’s strategy is the misquotation and the distortion of the divine command: “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (v. 1b). The misquotation is subtle and specific: God had said “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Genesis 2:16–17), a command that emphasized the permission (any tree, freely) and specified the one exception (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). The serpent inverts the emphasis: he foregrounds the prohibition and universalizes it (“you shall not eat from any tree”), casting God’s command as an oppressive restriction rather than a generous permission with a single exception.

Eve’s response in verses 2–3 partially corrects the serpent’s distortion but also introduces a modification of her own: she quotes the permission broadly (“from the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat”) but adds to the prohibition the clause “You shall not touch it”, a clause that God’s actual command in Genesis 2:17 did not include. Whether Eve’s addition represents a genuine misremembering, a deliberate exaggeration for emphasis, or the beginning of the distorted perception of the divine command that the serpent’s questioning has induced, its effect is to make the divine prohibition appear more oppressive than it was and thereby to prepare the ground for the serpent’s second move. The serpent has established, through his initial question and Eve’s response, that the divine command is something to be discussed and evaluated rather than simply received and obeyed, a subtle but devastating shift in the relational framework within which the command was given.

The serpent’s second move in verses 4–5 is the direct denial of the divine sanction combined with the suggestion of an alternative motivation for the prohibition: “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The serpent directly contradicts God’s *mot tamut* (“You surely will not die” is the exact negation of “you will surely die”), and imputes to God a motive of jealous withholding: the prohibition is not for the creature’s protection but for the Creator’s advantage, designed to prevent the creature from attaining the knowledge that would make it God’s equal. The entire relational basis of the test, the trust in the Creator’s word and the receptivity to the Creator’s provision, is attacked at its root: the creature is invited to suspect the Creator’s generosity, to doubt the Creator’s truthfulness, and to claim for itself the autonomy that the Creator has supposedly been withholding.

B. *The Capitulation: Desire, Appearance, and the Inversion of the Relational Order*

Genesis 3:6 narrates the capitulation in three stages that mirror the Johannine triad of 1 John 2:16, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life: “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (NASB 1995). The tree is evaluated in three dimensions: its physical appeal (“good for food”), its aesthetic appeal (“a delight to the eyes”), and its epistemological appeal (“desirable to make one wise”). Each dimension of the appeal corresponds to a dimension of the creature’s constitution that is being subverted: the physical appetite, the aesthetic sense, and the intellectual desire for wisdom, all of which were given as good gifts by the Creator, are now being enlisted in the service of the creature’s autonomous self-evaluation of the tree as good, rather than receiving the Creator’s assessment of the tree as the standard.

The detail that Adam was “with her” (v. 6) has significant theological implications that have been differently handled in the exegetical tradition. Paul’s argument in 1 Timothy 2:13–14 draws a distinction between Adam and Eve in the manner of their fall: “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” On Paul’s account, Eve was deceived by the serpent’s argument, while Adam sinned with full knowledge of what he was doing, which may explain why Paul’s federal headship argument in Romans 5 attributes the consequences of the fall to Adam rather than to Eve, even though Eve ate first. Adam’s deliberate choice, eating with his eyes open, in the presence of his wife, after observing the serpent’s exchange, is the act of willful, knowing, federal-head transgression that the covenant of works’ sanction falls upon. The probationary test was Adam’s responsibility as the federal head, and it was Adam’s failure as the federal head that determined the destiny of his posterity.

The full significance of the fall’s narrative, of the serpent’s strategy and Adam’s capitulation, is the reversal of the proper creaturely order of knowing and trusting. In the original state, Adam received the Creator’s word as the ground of his knowledge and the standard of his evaluation; the Creator’s assessment of what was good and what was harmful was the criterion by which Adam oriented his will, his affections, and his desires. In the fall, this order is inverted: the creature’s own sensory evaluation of the tree (“it was good for food”, “a delight to the eyes”, “desirable to make one wise”) becomes the criterion by which the Creator’s prohibition is evaluated and overridden. This inversion, from creature-receiving-Creator’s-word to creature-evaluating-Creator’s-word by her own standard, is the epistemological core of the fall, and it is the pattern that every subsequent human sin repeats: the creature substituting its own evaluation of what is good and desirable for the Creator’s assessment, preferring its own autonomous judgment to the revealed will of the One whose authority alone makes the creature’s existence possible.

VI. The Last Adam: What Adam Failed to Secure, Christ Has Secured

The Probationary Test Fulfilled in the Obedience of the Son

The probationary test of the first Adam and the obedience of the Last Adam are not merely parallel stories; they are the two acts of a single drama whose plot line runs from Genesis 2 to the cross and resurrection. The first Adam was tested with one prohibition in a garden of abundance and failed; the Last Adam was tested in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11) with the full force of the adversary’s temptation and succeeded. The first Adam was offered the serpent’s version of self-definition and chose it over the Creator’s word; the Last Adam was offered the kingdoms of the world, the bread of earthly provision, and the dramatic display of divine power, and refused them all in favor of the Father’s word: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, NASB 1995, citing Deuteronomy 8:3). The first Adam’s failure was the rejection of the principle that the creature lives by the Creator’s word; the Last Adam’s success was the embodiment of that principle in the face of every temptation to abandon it.

The wilderness temptation is the most visible single episode in the Last Adam’s reversal of the first Adam’s probationary failure, but it is not the only episode. The entire earthly life of Jesus Christ, from His birth to His death, is the probationary obedience that the covenant of works required and that the first Adam failed to provide. Every moment of His life in which He chose the Father’s will over His own, every act of radical trust in the Father’s provision in the face of poverty and rejection and suffering, every hour in Gethsemane in which He prayed “Not what I will, but what You will” (Mark 14:36, NASB 1995), all of this is the probationary obedience of the Last Adam, the covenant-fulfilling righteousness that Adam was invited to display in the garden and refused, now displayed in full in the Son who came to do what Adam failed to do. This is the active obedience of Christ: not merely the absence of sin, but the positive, comprehensive, lifelong fulfillment of the covenant’s requirement of perfect and personal obedience, in the specific probationary conditions that the first Adam faced and failed.

The eschatological consequence of the Last Adam’s success is the reversal and the surpassing of the first Adam’s failure. What the first Adam’s obedience would have secured, confirmed eschatological life, the non posse

peccare, the inheritance of the full covenantal promise for himself and his posterity, the Last Adam's obedience has secured for all who are in Him by faith. "Through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19, NASB 1995): the righteousness of the many is not the righteousness of each individual's own probationary success but the imputed righteousness of the Last Adam's probationary success received through faith. The first Adam failed the test that would have secured the inheritance; the Last Adam passed the test on behalf of those who had already forfeited the inheritance; and the imputation of the Last Adam's test-passing righteousness through faith is the specific mechanism by which the forfeited inheritance is restored and surpassed in the covenant of grace. The probationary test of Eden is the theological context within which the imputation of Christ's righteousness achieves its fullest and most precise meaning: it is the covenant-fulfilling obedience of the One who did what the first man was asked to do and failed to do, credited to the account of all who receive it by faith alone.

The doxological conclusion of Unit 5, the unit that has traced the original righteousness of the creation (Lesson 14), the covenant of works that organized the pre-fall relationship (Lesson 15), and the probationary test whose failure set the course of redemptive history (Lesson 16), is the doxology of the grace that responded to the failure with the obedience of the Son. The series now turns to Unit 6: human sexuality, marriage, and gender, the application of the doctrines of creation, image, and complementarity to the most intimate and the most contested dimensions of human creaturely existence. But the foundation for that discussion has been laid in the Units that precede it: humanity was created very good (Unit 2), in the image of God (Unit 3), with a whole-person constitution (Unit 4), and in an original righteousness placed under a covenant that the Last Adam has fulfilled (Unit 5). Every discussion of sexuality, marriage, and gender in Unit 6 will stand on this foundation.

"For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

Romans 5:19, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Probationary Test	The divinely appointed trial of Adam's covenant loyalty, embodied in the prohibition of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). The test was designed not to trap Adam but to provide the occasion for his freely chosen, deliberate, covenant-conscious obedience to the Creator's word, the opportunity to move from the constitutional righteousness of the original creation to the confirmed eschatological righteousness of the non posse peccare through a single act of trusting covenant faithfulness. The test was simple in form (one prohibition in a garden of abundance) but profound in substance (engaging the full relational, volitional, and epistemological constitution of the creature).
Libertarian Freedom (Compatibilist vs. Libertarian)	Adam in the original state possessed genuine freedom of the will, freedom in the sense of the genuine ability to choose either obedience or disobedience, not determined by prior causes to sin or to refrain from sin. The Reformed tradition has distinguished between libertarian freedom (the power of contrary choice, i.e., the ability to have chosen otherwise) and compatibilist freedom (freedom as the uncoerced expression of the will's own desires). In the original state, Adam possessed both: his will was genuinely inclined toward God (compatibilist) and genuinely capable of choosing against that inclination (libertarian). The fall was therefore the exercise of genuine freedom in both senses, an uncoerced, unconstrained act of will moving against its own proper orientation.
Sufficiency of Resources	The theological affirmation that Adam was equipped with everything the probationary test required: intellectual sufficiency (the cognitive capacity to understand the command without ambiguity), moral sufficiency (the posse non peccare, the genuine ability not to sin, grounded in original righteousness), and relational sufficiency (the direct, personal, immediate fellowship with God whose generosity and trustworthiness Adam had personally experienced). The sufficiency of Adam's resources is a necessary component of the test's integrity as a genuine trial of covenant loyalty: the creature who failed was not set up to fail but was equipped to succeed, which is precisely what makes the failure inexcusable.
Serpent's Strategy (Genesis 3)	The three-stage strategy of temptation employed in Genesis 3:1–5: (1) the distortion and misquotation of the divine command ("has God said, you shall not eat from any tree?"), attacking the accuracy and the fairness of the prohibition; (2) the direct denial of the divine sanction ("You surely will not die!"), attacking the truthfulness of the Creator's word; and (3) the suggestion of an alternative motivation for the prohibition ("God knows that ... you will be like God"), attacking the goodness of the Creator's character. The three-stage strategy systematically undermines the relational basis of the probationary test: trust in the Creator's word, receptivity to the Creator's assessment of what is good, and dependence on the Creator's provision.
Federal Head (Adam as)	Adam's role in the covenant of works as the representative of the entire human race, whose obedience or disobedience would determine the covenant standing of all his natural posterity before God. Adam acted not merely as a private individual but as a public person (Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 20) whose single definitive act had universal and eschatological consequences. The federal

	headship of Adam is the structural basis for the doctrine of original sin (the fall's consequences extending to all humanity) and the structural template for the federal headship of Christ (the Last Adam's obedience conferring righteousness on all who are in Him by faith).
Wilderness Temptation (Last Adam)	Jesus Christ's forty-day temptation by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13), understood theologically as the Last Adam's probationary test, the specific occasion in which the adversary attempted the same strategy against the Son of God that he employed successfully against the first Adam: subverting trust in the Father's word, casting doubt on the Father's provision, and offering self-sufficient autonomy as an alternative to dependent trust. The Last Adam's successful resistance, expressed in three Scripture quotations from Deuteronomy, each affirming the principle that the creature lives by the Creator's word, reverses the first Adam's failure and embodies the covenant-fulfilling obedience that the active obedience of Christ provides on behalf of His people.
Active Obedience (Review)	Christ's lifelong, comprehensive, perfect fulfillment of the law's demands throughout His earthly ministry, constituting the positive righteousness imputed to the believer through faith alongside the passive obedience (His bearing of the law's penalty on the cross). In the context of the probationary test, the active obedience is the fulfillment of the covenant of works' condition of perfect and personal obedience that the first Adam failed to provide. Every act of Christ's earthly obedience, from His submission to His parents (Luke 2:51), to His baptism in fulfillment of all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), to His prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36), to His death on the cross, is a dimension of the probationary obedience that Adam was asked to display and refused.
Inversion of Creaturely Order	The epistemological core of the fall, described in Genesis 3:6: the creature substituting its own sensory and intellectual evaluation of the tree ("good for food", "a delight to the eyes", "desirable to make one wise") for the Creator's assessment (the prohibition of Genesis 2:17). In the original state, the creature received the Creator's word as the ground of its knowledge and the standard of its evaluation, the creaturely epistemological order proper to a creature made in the image of a God whose word is the final standard of truth and goodness. The fall inverted this order, placing the creature's own autonomous evaluation above the Creator's word, the epistemological pattern that every subsequent human sin repeats.
Gethsemane Obedience	Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion: "Not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36, NASB 1995). Theologically significant as the Last Adam's specific reversal of the first Adam's refusal in the garden of Eden: where Adam chose his own assessment of the tree's desirability over the Father's word, the Last Adam chose the Father's will over His own natural desire to be spared the cup of suffering. The Gethsemane obedience is the culminating expression of the active obedience's pattern of creaturely submission to the Creator's word, the specific moment in which the covenant-fulfilling obedience of the Last Adam reaches its most personally costly and most theologically concentrated expression.
Protology and Eschatology	The relationship between the doctrines of the beginning (protology: creation, original state, covenant of works) and the doctrines of the end (eschatology: resurrection, final judgment, new creation, glorification). The series' Units 2–5

constitute the protological foundation upon which the eschatological vision of Units 8–9 will build. A correct understanding of the beginning, what humanity was created to be, what the covenant of works promised, what the probationary test was designed to achieve, is the precondition for a correct understanding of the end: what the Last Adam achieved, what the covenant of grace provides, and what the eschatological glorification of the redeemed will complete and surpass.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the fall was not inevitable, that the God who designed the probationary test also equipped the tested creature with everything the test required, and that Adam's failure was therefore a genuine, voluntary, inexcusable act of creaturely rebellion rather than the predetermined expression of a structural deficiency. This conviction is theologically necessary for the integrity of the doctrine of sin's culpability: total depravity describes the comprehensive damage of a voluntary betrayal, not the inevitable development of a design flaw, and the full weight of human moral responsibility depends on the genuine freedom that the probationary test presupposed. The Christian who holds this conviction will understand her own sin not merely as the expression of a damaged nature (which it is) but as the continuation of a pattern of voluntary preference of self over God that the first Adam initiated and that every subsequent human being perpetuates in her own choices.

We must also believe that what Adam failed to secure, the Last Adam has secured on behalf of all who trust in Him. This conviction transforms the doctrine of the probationary test from a story of failure and tragedy into a story of failure and recovery, into the specific theological context within which the imputation of Christ's righteousness through faith makes its fullest and most precise sense. The righteousness imputed to the believer is not a vague divine quality but the specific, covenant-fulfilling, probationary-test-passing obedience of the Last Adam, who lived the covenant faithfulness that the first Adam was asked to live and refused to live, and who secured through that faithfulness the eschatological life that the first Adam's failure forfeited. To believe in the imputation of Christ's righteousness with this precision is to hold the gospel in its deepest theological form.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the narrative of the serpent's strategy and Adam's capitulation produce in you a renewed awareness of the specific pattern by which sin consistently operates in your own life. The serpent's three moves, distorting the divine word, denying the divine sanction, and suggesting an alternative motivation for the divine prohibition, are recognizable in every form of temptation that the Christian faces in the present: the suggestion that God's word does not really say what it says, or does not really mean what it means, or is not really binding in this specific situation; the suggestion that the consequences of disobedience are not as serious as the word claims; and the suggestion that the Creator's restrictions are motivated by withholding rather than by generosity. Recognizing these patterns in the specific temptations you face is the application of the Genesis 3 narrative to the present Christian life, and it is an application that the narrative itself is designed to produce.

Desire the specific quality of trust in the Creator's word that the probationary test was designed to confirm, the trust that Adam was asked to display and refused to display, and that the Last Adam displayed on behalf of all who are in Him. This trust is not the trust of one who has not been tempted to doubt; it is the trust of one who has heard the serpent's counter-claim, who has felt the appeal of the tree's appearance, and who has chosen nonetheless to receive the Creator's word as the ground of her orientation rather than her own autonomous evaluation. The believer who prays "Not my will, but Your will be done" is praying in the specific spirit of the Gethsemane obedience, the Last Adam's reversal of the first Adam's refusal, and is participating in the pattern of covenant faithfulness that the probationary test was always designed to produce.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- Read Genesis 3:1–6 slowly and in full, attending to the precise sequence of the serpent's strategy and Adam and Eve's response. Identify each of the three stages of the serpent's strategy (distortion of the word, denial of the sanction, suggestion of alternative motive) and note how each stage builds on the previous one. Then ask: where do you recognize this three-stage pattern in the specific temptations you face in your own life? The temptation may not involve a tree in a garden, but the pattern is the same: the questioning of God's

word, the minimizing of the sanction, and the suggestion that God's restrictions are motivated by withholding. Write out a brief account of one specific temptation pattern in your own life, mapping it onto the three stages of the serpent's strategy.

- Read Matthew 4:1–11 alongside Genesis 3:1–6, treating the wilderness temptation as the Last Adam's reversal of the first Adam's probationary failure. Identify the specific parallels and contrasts: what is offered to the Last Adam that was offered to the first, and how does the Last Adam's response differ from the first Adam's? What principle does each of the Last Adam's three Scripture citations embody (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10), and how does each principle address the specific temptation offered? How does the Last Adam's consistent appeal to the word of God, "It is written", reverse the first Adam's failure to maintain the Creator's word as the standard of his evaluation?
- **Read John Murray's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (1955), Part One ("Redemption Accomplished"), chapter 2: "The Obedience of Christ."** Murray's account of the active and passive obedience of Christ as the fulfillment of the covenant of works is the most exegetically careful and theologically precise available in the modern Reformed tradition. His treatment of the active obedience as the fulfillment of the specific probationary requirement that the covenant of works established illuminates precisely the connection between the probationary test of the first Adam and the saving obedience of the Last Adam that this lesson has traced.
- Identify one specific pattern of sin in your own life that most clearly embodies the epistemological inversion of Genesis 3:6, the substitution of your own evaluation of what is desirable or beneficial for the Creator's revealed assessment in the Scriptures. It may be a pattern of rationalizing disobedience to a specific biblical command in the light of circumstances that appear to justify the exception; or a pattern of dismissing the Scriptures' assessment of a specific behavior's harmfulness in the light of your own experience of its apparent benefits; or a pattern of treating the Creator's prohibition of something as oppressively restrictive rather than as generously protective. Name the pattern, identify the specific biblical word that is being evaluated rather than received, and commit to one specific practice of Scripture engagement that will most directly address the inversion.
- Spend time this week meditating on the contrast between Adam's prayer (not recorded, because Adam did not pray in Gethsemane) and Christ's prayer in Gethsemane: "Not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36, NASB 1995). This is the prayer that reverses the epistemological inversion of the fall, the creature's willingness to submit its own desire and its own assessment to the Father's will as the final standard. Use this prayer as the pattern of your own daily prayer practice: beginning each day with a specific identification of the areas of your life in which your own will and desire are most in tension with the revealed will of God, and offering each of those areas to the Father in the specific submission that the Gethsemane prayer models.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before working through this lesson, what was your understanding of the purpose of the probationary test? Did you regard it primarily as a mechanism for establishing Adam's obedience or disobedience (the "finding out what he would do" model), or as a gracious provision for the escalation of the creature's goodness from constitutional to confirmed (the model this lesson defends)? Has the lesson changed your understanding, and if so, what specific consideration was most responsible for the change?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Genesis 3:1–6 carefully and identify the three specific stages of the serpent's strategy: (1) the misquotation and distortion of the divine command (v. 1), (2) the direct denial of the divine sanction (v. 4), and (3) the suggestion of an alternative motive for the prohibition (v. 5). For each stage, identify the specific way in which the serpent attacks the relational basis of the probationary test: the trust in God's word, the confidence in God's truthfulness, and the faith in God's goodness. How does each stage of the serpent's strategy prepare the ground for the next?
- Read Genesis 3:6 and identify the three dimensions of the tree's appeal described in the verse: "good for food," "a delight to the eyes," and "desirable to make one wise." How does each dimension correspond to one of the lust categories that John identifies in 1 John 2:16 ("the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life")? What does the three-fold character of the tree's appeal suggest about the comprehensiveness of the fall's engagement with the creature's constitution?
- Read Matthew 4:1–11, attending to the specific form of each temptation and the specific Scripture citation with which Jesus responds to each. For each temptation, identify: (a) what is being offered; (b) what creaturely vulnerability the offer targets; (c) the specific Scripture Jesus cites; and (d) the specific principle the citation embodies. How does each of Jesus's responses embody the principle that the creature lives by the Creator's word rather than by its own autonomous evaluation?
- Read 1 Timothy 2:13–14 alongside Romans 5:12–19. How does Paul's distinction between Adam's deliberate sin and Eve's deception in 1 Timothy 2:14 relate to the federal headship argument of Romans 5:12–19? Why does Paul ground the universal consequences of the fall in Adam's transgression rather than Eve's, even though Eve ate first (Genesis 3:6)?
- Read Ecclesiastes 7:29 in light of the probationary test. What does the Preacher's contrast between "God made men upright" and "they have sought out many devices" contribute to the understanding of the test's freedom and the fall's culpability? What does the phrase "many devices" suggest about the creativity and the comprehensiveness with which fallen human beings have pursued their own autonomous self-definition since the fall?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that the probationary test was a gracious provision designed to move Adam from constitutional righteousness to confirmed righteousness, from *posse non peccare* to *non posse peccare*, through a single act of free covenant faithfulness. Do you find this account of the test's purpose theologically adequate? Does it adequately address the question of why God would design a test whose outcome He knew in advance would be failure? What additional resources, from the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of the fall's consequences in redemption, or the doctrine of the Last Adam's success, might be needed to fully address the question of the test's purpose?
- The lesson identifies the epistemological inversion of Genesis 3:6, the creature evaluating the Creator's word rather than receiving it, as the core of the fall. How does this epistemological analysis of the fall relate to the Reformed doctrine of the noetic effects of sin (the darkening of the understanding)? Does the epistemological inversion precede and cause the darkening of the understanding, or is the darkening of the

understanding itself a form of the epistemological inversion? How does the Last Adam's consistent appeal to the word of God address the epistemological dimension of the fall?

- Paul's account of the fall in Romans 5:12–19 grounds the universal consequences in the single act of the one man Adam. But Genesis 3 describes the fall as a two-person event involving both Adam and Eve. How does the doctrine of federal headship relate to the two-person character of the fall narrative? What does it mean that Adam, as the federal head, bears the representative weight of the fall even though Eve ate first? And how does the distinction Paul draws in 1 Timothy 2:14, between Adam's deliberate sin and Eve's deception, illuminate the federal headship's grounding in Adam?
- The lesson identifies the Gethsemane prayer, "Not my will, but Your will be done", as the Last Adam's specific reversal of the first Adam's epistemological inversion. Is this parallel exegetically warranted? What specifically does the Gethsemane prayer reverse about the fall's core pattern, and what does it embody about the Last Adam's probationary obedience? Does the Gethsemane account present the Last Adam as genuinely tested (with genuine stakes and genuine resistance required) or as merely going through the motions of a test whose outcome was never in question?
- Unit 5 as a whole, covering original righteousness (Lesson 14), the covenant of works (Lesson 15), and the probationary test (Lesson 16), has established the theological foundation for the doctrine of sin. Before the Hamartiology series addresses the fall's nature and consequences in detail, reflect on the relationship between the protological material of Unit 5 and the soteriological material that Unit 5 anticipates. What specific theological convictions established in Unit 5 are most essential for a correct understanding of the gospel? How does each of the three Unit 5 lessons contribute to the theological framework within which the imputation of Christ's righteousness through faith can be most precisely understood?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson identifies three recognizable patterns in the serpent's strategy, distorting the divine word, denying the divine sanction, and suggesting that divine restrictions are motivated by withholding rather than generosity, that appear in every form of temptation. Identify one specific temptation pattern in your own life or in the life of the congregation you serve in which each of these three strategies is most recognizably operative. For each pattern, identify the specific biblical word that is being questioned or evaluated, the specific sanction that is being minimized, and the specific suspicion of divine withholding that is being cultivated. What specific response, modeled on the Last Adam's "It is written", would most directly address each pattern?
- The lesson argues that Adam was equipped with everything the probationary test required, intellectual, moral, and relational sufficiency, and that the fall was therefore inexcusable. How does this affirmation of Adam's sufficiency affect your pastoral engagement with the question of personal moral responsibility in a post-fall world? Is there a tension between the pre-fall sufficiency of Adam's resources and the post-fall insufficiency of the fallen creature's resources for obedience? How does the doctrine of common grace and the restored resources of regeneration navigate this tension for the regenerate believer?
- Unit 5 concludes this lesson, and the series now moves into Unit 6 on human sexuality, marriage, and gender. Before engaging Unit 6, reflect on the foundation that Units 2–5 have laid for that discussion. What specific doctrines established in Units 2–5, about creation, image, complementarity, original righteousness, the covenant of works, and the probationary test, are most directly relevant to the questions of sexuality, marriage, and gender that Unit 6 will address? How does the theological foundation of Units 2–5 equip the student to engage the Unit 6 material with both biblical fidelity and pastoral wisdom?
- The probationary test's design, one restriction in a garden of abundance, simple in form and profound in substance, models a pastoral principle about the relationship between divine generosity and divine command: God gives everything and asks for the acknowledgment of His authority over one thing. Where do you see this same pattern in the commands of the new covenant? Identify one specific command of the new covenant that follows the same structural logic, extensive divine generosity providing the context for a

specific divine command that calls for trusting acknowledgment of God's authority, and reflect on how the probationary test's framework illuminates the character and the purpose of that command.

- The lesson closes by noting that Unit 6's discussion of human sexuality, marriage, and gender stands on the foundation laid in Units 2–5. As you prepare to enter Unit 6, write a brief statement (one paragraph) of the theological convictions about humanity, drawn from the first sixteen lessons of this series, that you will bring to the discussion of sexuality, marriage, and gender. What does it mean for that discussion that humanity was specially created (Unit 2), made in the image of God (Unit 3), with a whole-person constitution (Unit 4), in original righteousness and under a covenant whose Last Adam has fulfilled (Unit 5)? How does each of these convictions shape the specific claims you expect Unit 6 to make about the biblical theology of sexuality, marriage, and gender?

Prayer Focus

Open this sixteenth lesson of the Anthropology series, the capstone of Unit 5 and the penultimate lesson before the series turns to the theology of human sexuality, marriage, and gender, with a reading of Matthew 4:1–11, the narrative of the Last Adam’s probationary test in the wilderness. Read it slowly, in the light of everything this lesson and this unit have established about the first Adam’s probationary test in the garden: the same adversary, employing variations of the same strategy, against the One who had come to do what the first man failed to do. Attend to the specific character of each temptation and the specific character of each response: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, NASB 1995), the principle that the creature lives by the Creator’s word, the exact principle that the first Adam refused to maintain and that the Last Adam embodies in the face of every temptation to abandon it. “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (v. 7), the refusal to condition trust in the Father’s provision on the demonstration of the Father’s reliability, the exact trust that the first Adam was asked to demonstrate and refused. “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only” (v. 10), the declaration that the creature’s worship and service belong to the Creator alone, the exact covenant loyalty that the first Adam was given the opportunity to demonstrate and squandered. Read the passage as the gospel in narrative form: the One who reverses what the first man did, who passes the test that the first man failed, who secures the covenant inheritance that the first man forfeited, for all who are in Him by faith.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the doctrine of the probationary test and its Last Adam fulfillment to deepen your worship of each person of the Trinity. Begin with the Father, who designed the probationary test as a gracious provision for the creature’s escalation from constitutional righteousness to confirmed righteousness, who knew before the test was given that the first Adam would fail it, and who had determined from before the foundation of the world to send the Last Adam to pass the test in the first Adam’s place. Adore the Father whose response to the creature’s betrayal of the covenant was not the unmitigated execution of the sanction but the sending of the Son into the wilderness to face the adversary, into the garden of Gethsemane to pray “Not my will, but Your will be done,” and onto the cross to bear the weight of the covenant’s sanction that the first Adam incurred. Move to the Son, the Last Adam, who succeeded at every point where the first Adam failed: who trusted the Father’s word against the adversary’s counter-claim, who rested in the Father’s provision rather than grasping for autonomous self-sufficiency, and who submitted His own will to the Father’s will in the most costly act of creaturely covenant faithfulness that the history of the world has ever witnessed. Adore the Son who endured the probationary test on behalf of those who had already failed their own, and who by His endurance secured for them the covenant inheritance that they had forfeited and could never have regained on their own. Conclude with the Spirit, who was present at the wilderness temptation (Matthew 4:1: “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”), who sustained the Last Adam through the test, who applies the Last Adam’s covenant-fulfilling obedience to the believer through regeneration and the gift of faith, and whose indwelling presence in the believer is the first installment of the eschatological inheritance that the Last Adam’s probationary success secured.

Pray together at the conclusion of Unit 5 in three specific directions, and in anticipation of Unit 6. First, for the theological integration that Unit 5 has provided: that the doctrine of original righteousness, the covenant of works, and the probationary test would function in the congregation not as three separate academic doctrines but as three interconnected perspectives on the single theological reality of the Creator’s gracious purpose for the creature, a purpose that the creature’s failure did not ultimately frustrate but that the Last Adam’s obedience has fully and finally secured. Second, for the personal application of the probationary test’s narrative to the specific forms of temptation that the congregation’s members face: that the recognition of the serpent’s three-stage strategy in the specific temptations of the present life would produce in every member the specific responsiveness to the word of God, the “It is written” of the Last Adam’s wilderness response, that most directly counteracts the serpent’s strategy. Third, in anticipation of Unit 6 on human sexuality, marriage, and gender: pray that the theological foundation laid in Units 2–5, the very good creation, the image of God in male and female, the whole-

person constitution, the original righteousness and the covenant of works, would equip the congregation to engage the most contested dimensions of the contemporary cultural conversation with the biblical fidelity, the theological precision, and the pastoral compassion that both the Scriptures and the people they address require.

“Jesus said to him, ‘It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.””

Matthew 4:10, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–24; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 14:32–42; Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49; 1 Timothy 2:13–14*

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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