

**“God Saves”—*God’s Grace in Christ***  
**ECO Essential Tenets Study for BYF - August 2, 2026**  
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**1. Announcements and Prayer**

**2. Quick review of July 26 lesson on Incarnation**

- The problems many people and faiths/philosophies/perspectives have with the Incarnation
- The major heresies (and how they keep showing up today)

**3. Today’s lesson now moves to the areas of distinctiveness for Presbyterians:**

- Not accepted by all Christians; in some areas, in the minority of Christian thought
- Major emphases in our theology, such as sin, grace, election, covenant, and stewardship, set us apart
- Not that other Christians don’t believe these in some way, but that we emphasize them

**4. Section III.A, “God’s Grace in Christ,” *Essentials of the Reformed Tradition*, ECO Essential Tenets**

*God declared that the world He created was good and that human beings, made in His own image, were very good. **The present disordered state of the world, in which we and all things are subject to misery and to evil, is not God’s doing, but is rather a result of humanity’s free, sinful rebellion against God’s will.** God created human beings from the dust of the earth and His own breath, to be His images and representatives, conduits of God’s grace to the creation. Since the fall our natural tendency is to abuse and exploit the creation, preferring evil to goodness. God also created human beings to speak His grace and truth to one another, to be helpers who are fit for one another, so that our social relationships would strengthen our ability to serve and obey Him. Since the fall, our natural tendency is to engage in relationships of tyranny and injustice with one another, in which power is used not to protect and serve but to demean. God further created human beings with the capacity for relationship with Him, with His law written on our hearts so that we had the ability to worship Him in love and obey Him by living holy lives. Since the fall, our natural tendency is to hate God and our neighbor, to worship idols of our own devising rather than the one true God.*

*As a result of sin, human life is poisoned by everlasting death. **No part of human life is untouched by sin. Our desires are no longer trustworthy guides to goodness, and what seems natural to us no longer corresponds to God’s design. We are not merely wounded in our sin; we are dead, unable to save ourselves.** Apart from God’s initiative, salvation is not possible for us. Our only hope is God’s grace. We discover in Scripture that this is a great hope, for our God is the One whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.*

*This grace does not end when we turn to sin. Although we are each deserving of God’s eternal condemnation, the eternal Son assumed our human nature, joining us in our misery and offering Himself on the cross in order to free us from slavery to death and sin. Jesus takes our place both in bearing the weight of condemnation against our sin on the cross and in offering to God the perfect obedience that humanity owes to Him but is no longer able to give. All humanity participates in the fall into sin. Those who are united through faith with Jesus Christ are fully forgiven from all our sin, so that there is indeed a new creation. We are declared justified, not because of any good that we have done, but only because of God’s grace extended to us in Jesus Christ. **In union with Christ through the power of the Spirit we are brought into right relation with the Father, who receives us as His adopted children.***

***Jesus Christ is the only Way to this adoption, the sole path by which sinners become children of God,** for He is the only-begotten Son, and it is only in union with Him that a believer is able to know God as Father. Only in Jesus Christ is the truth about the Triune God, fully and perfectly revealed, for only He is the Truth, only He has seen the Father, and only He can make the Father known. Only Jesus Christ is the*

*new Life that is offered, for He is the bread from heaven and the fountain of living water, the one by whom all things were made, in whom all things hold together. The exclusivity of these claims establishes that God's love is not impersonal, but a particular and intimate love in which each individual child of God is called by name and known as precious; that God's love is not only acceptance, but a transforming and effective love in which His image within us is restored so that we are capable of holy living.*

#### **5. Before you talk about the Good News, you have to talk about the bad news...**

- Human sinfulness in all its flaws and compulsions
- Humans incapable of being good enough often enough by divine standards
- Not just a few bad people, but every human falls short
- Key Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-24; Exodus 32:1-35; Judges 2:10-23; 2 Samuel 11:1-27; Matthew 5:17-46; Romans 3:9-20; Ephesians 2:1-7

#### **6. But once you face the bad news, then the Good News becomes quite tangible and real...**

- Term “good news” comes from Greek word we translate as “gospel”
- God initiates our rescue and redemption, even as we are unable to act
- Part of his plan from ever since Adam and Eve’s fall; ade fully functional and restorative in Jesus
- Offered as a gift: just believe and trust in what God can and does do, not in your efforts
- Key Scriptures: Genesis 12:1-9; Genesis 15:1-6; Exodus 34:1-10; Psalm 51:1-19 ; Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 15:11-32; Romans 5:6-11; Ephesians 1:3-8 and 2:8-10

#### **7. Just for fun, there is a heresy attached to this one: Pelagianism...**

- Named after Pelagius, British monk and contemporary and opponent of Augustine
- Chief thought: What God commands, he enables: therefore if he wants you to obey, he makes it possible
- Humans therefore able to do what God commands (if you just want to badly enough)
- Oldest game in the religious/spiritual book: “You are like God” (see Genesis 3...)
- Augustine’s response in short: “Have you ever read the Old and New Testaments?”

#### **DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- *Look at the human condition. How would you describe it? How does the Tenets in III.A describe it?*
- *Look at the bold print, 2nd paragraph of the Tenet, beginning “No part of human life...” How deeply does that statement say that human fallenness goes?*
- *What word borrowed from families the world over is used to describe what God does for us through Christ? Why and how is this concept such a strong, powerful one in Christian theology?*
- *Of the passages listed in point #6, which one is your favorite? Why? What connection does it have?*
- *Some think that humans are capable on their own, at least in part. The Presbyterian tradition says no, that it’s all up to God to act, and we simply respond. Why does this cause such problems for some?*

#### **8. Closing Prayer and Next Week**

|             |                         |                                               |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| August 9    | “God Chooses/Sends”     | <i>Election for Salvation and Service</i>     |
| August 16   | “God Gathers”           | <i>Covenant Life in the Church</i>            |
| August 23   | “God Entrusts”          | <i>Faithful Stewardship of All of Life</i>    |
| August 30   | “God Forms”             | <i>Living in Obedience to the Word of God</i> |
| September 6 | Stand-Alone Bible Study | (Labor Day weekend) TBD                       |