

“We Belong”

Pastor Charlie Berthoud

FOUNDATIONS of Faith

Fall 2025 Sermon Series

Sunday, October 26, 2025

“We Belong” | Romans 14:8 | Pastor Charlie Berthoud

On the first Sunday of every month, our liturgy includes a version of the Ten Commandments.

We recite the commandments AFTER we confess our sins and hear the good news of God’s forgiveness. Our liturgy continues with:

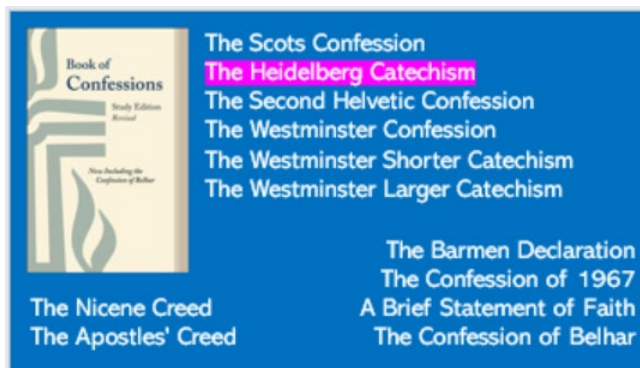
“As forgiven people, how then shall we live....”

And then we move into the Ten Commandments.

This is important, as the commandments are NOT preconditions for God’s love; God doesn’t say “if you follow these then maybe I’ll save you.”

And the commandments are NOT meant to make us feel bad. Rather the Ten Commandments are meant to guide us on the journey of faith.

The inspiration for this comes right from the Bible. In the book of Exodus, God’s people are enslaved, under the empire of Pharaoh. God saves them through Moses, setting them free on a journey toward the promised land. As that journey begins, AFTER they had been set free, God shares the commandments. Moses and the people were given these commandments not as a precondition and not to make them feel bad. The commandments were meant to guide them on the journey toward the promised land.



I bring this up today because the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 gave Christians a more accurate understanding of the law.

The HC is one of six Reformation era creeds in our *Book of Confessions*.

Over the past two months we’ve been thinking about our theological and historical foundations of faith with the help of the BoC and the 12 credal statements in it.

A bit of info on the Heidelberg Catechism:

- Written in 1563, in Germany
- Author: Zacharius Ursinus
- 129 questions and answers

- Sections on the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and Ten Commandments
- Affirmed by many Reformed churches
- "I" and "we" statements; very personal
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The 129 questions are divided into three sections, reflecting the movement of the Christian life:

3-11	Misery
12-85	Deliverance
86-129	Gratitude

People who are more clever than me have made alliterative summaries of the HC:

Sin	Salvation	Service
Guilt	Grace	Gratitude

If you've been following my train of thought here, you can probably guess that the Q&A on the Ten Commandments is located not in the SIN section, not in the SALVATION section, but in the SERVICE section.

<u>Heidelberg Catechism</u>		
Questions 3-11	Questions 12-85	Questions 86-129
Misery	Deliverance	Gratitude
Sin	Salvation	Service
Guilt	Grace	Gratitude
Where are the Ten Commandments discussed?		

"As forgiven people, as loved people how then shall we live....?" The commandments invite us to live with gratitude, to live in a new way. This understanding of the law is one of the gifts of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The three-part framework of the HC is likely inspired by the book of Romans in our New Testament.

Romans begins acknowledging sin

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (3.23)

We see the reality of sin on a personal level, as we say and do hurtful things to each other, and we see in society, where hunger and poverty and racism and environmental destruction are realities we too easily accept. Romans goes on to describe God's saving love in Jesus Christ in the middle chapters. Appropriate for today when we have a baptism

Romans 6--Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

This forgiveness of God invites us to walk in “newness of life”, to live as changed people.

And then Romans concludes with encouragement to live a new life.

Romans 12 begins with “therefore” and goes on to paint a picture of what the Christian life looks like as people who have been transformed by the love of God.

Romans 12 is a great book of the Bible and good one for Reformation Sunday.

Be transformed

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor....

Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

In Romans 14, we get sort of a summary statement of the book and of our faith. This is our scripture lesson for today. Listen for God’s word.

We don’t live for ourselves and we don’t die for ourselves. If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to God.

Those words from Romans 14 inspired the very first question of the HC.

Question 1: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Answer: That I am not my own, but belong— body and soul, in life and in death— to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.... Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

As we conclude our two-month series on *The Book of Confessions* and our foundations of faith, we’re sort of ending where we began.

Way back in early September, we looked at the 1991 addition to the BoC, “A Brief Statement of Faith” and that statement opens with

In life and in death we belong to God.

One way to summarize the entire BoC is in this simple phrase: We belong to God.

Belonging really important in the world today—and it's hard

We live in what has been described as “a loneliness epidemic.”

Every day approximately 20-35% of people are lonely, disconnected.

Loneliness impacts our mental health, and our physical health. I've read that loneliness has the negative health impact of smoking about a pack of cigarettes a day.

Loneliness impacts all age groups, but it seems particularly hard for young adults, people in their 20s and early 30s who are venturing out from school into a big world.

And the sad reality is that too many young people who have felt disconnected have found a sense of connection in hate—hatred of people because of their sexual identity, their immigration status, their political party, and such.

Loneliness is also impacting seniors. As health issues increase and mobility decreases, it's hard to stay connected to people.

The good news of the gospel is that we belong.

We belong to God and to each other through a church, where we:

- Have foundational words in scripture and the BoC, which guide, challenge, and nurture us.
- Trying to keep learning God's love, so we can live God's love; we know that we don't have all the answers and that we are reformed always reforming
- Recognize we are all created in the image of God, one body with many parts—diverse and different and beautiful parts
- Hear the commandment to love God and love neighbor, and from that we affirm the Matthew 25 initiative: congregational vitality, eradicating systemic poverty, dismantling structural racism
- We weep with those who weep and we rejoice with those who rejoice, and in this crazy world, we pray for wisdom and courage
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We belong to God, we belong to each other.

If you came to church today because you feel lonely or disconnected, you came to the right place.

We belong to God and to each other, and we try to strengthen that belonging every day.

Just to make it abundantly clear, we have three reminders about how we belong to God and each other

1. We celebrate a baptism today
2. We welcomed eight new members
3. 100th Birthday

Last Sunday, we shared that a member of our congregation was turning 100 last Monday. Many of us signed a card for him. Sunday afternoon I took it to him, and he was delighted.

At the conclusion of our visit, I prayed for him, thanking God for the gift of his 100 years, for his family, and for life. After I said amen, this 100 year old said, “I want to pray also. So he prayed for me and my family and he gave thanks to God for the kind people of Covenant Presbyterian Church.

We belong to each other, and we belong to God. Amen.

