

## ROMANS 14:1-12

### CONVINCED AND CONVICTED IN WORSHIP


“As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

“One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honour of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

“Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,

‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,  
and every tongue shall confess to God.’

“So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”<sup>1</sup>

ne of the greatest tragedies to plague modern Christendom are the anathemas Christians pronounce against one another. These maledictions toward other believers usually arise out of arguments over opinions. Paul warns Christians not to “argue about doubtful issues.”<sup>2</sup> Both strong Christians and weak Christians can be equally adept at pronouncing judgement against each other because of private opinions. Thus, for all the problems we face in this world as Christians, one of the gravest dangers to our faith and practise is the loss of unity arising from the attitude of fellow Christians.

In a church I pastored for a brief while, one worshipper admirably blended godly gentleness and strength. This man had suffered greatly during the Second World War. He had been a sergeant in the Dutch army when the Nazis invaded Holland. Joining the underground resistance, during the following six years he lived under unrelenting threat of imminent death. His family—his wife, his children, and even his brother—paid an unimaginable price for his conscientious choice to resist the nightmarish evil imposed by the German occupation of his homeland.

During those years of living without a public identity, knowing that momentarily he might be captured and tortured until dead, Gerry acquired the habit of smoking a pipe. He did not smoke heavily, nor even frequently; but in later years he did enjoy sitting quietly each evening with his pipe and smoking a bowl of fine cut tobacco.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> **Holman Christian Standard Bible** (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN 2003)

Gerry loved God, and he loved to sing. He joined the church choir, but his tenure would be brief. One woman, a self-appointed arbiter elegantiae of the Faith objected to his singing in the choir. “He has an unsanctified voice,” she announced to the assembled choir. Confused as to her meaning, one choir member asked for clarification. “He smokes a pipe,” she haughtily announced, “and therefore he has an unsanctified voice.”

Upon hearing his account, and having previously encountered that shrewish creature, I laughingly told Gerry that he should have responded that evening by saying, “Madam, you have an unsanctified tongue. Here is a pair of scissors. Cut it off.”

Strong or weak, we each bring to church attitudes and opinions that can hurt or restrict others. It is all well and good for me to encourage you to affirm one another and to encourage one another, but how should we treat one another at worship?

**THE ISSUE FOR THE CHURCH** — A church must be a welcoming place where wounded people can find refuge. Christians are not cut out with a cookie cutter; rather, we differ in every imaginable aspect, with the sole exception that we have each put our faith in the Risen Son of God. We have each been born from above and into the Family of God through faith in Christ. Nevertheless, we are each at differing stages of maturation. Among us are some who have grappled to understand and to apply divine truth throughout long years. These individuals have internalised the great truths concerning the Son of God and they are making every effort to walk with Him in the Spirit.

Others have just initiated that journey, and they are not even aware of the implications of their struggle that at times seems overwhelming and on occasion even appears futile. They may be weak in their faith, and they could be easily offended; yet, they are confident of their salvation and of their acceptance in the Risen Son of God.

Both the one who has walked with Christ throughout long years and the one who is only beginning the journey with the Master meet together in the House of God. Superficially, we might imagine that the one who has named the Name of Christ for many years is the stronger of the two, but that is not always the case. I often say that it does not matter how long you have been on the journey; what matters is how far you have come. Frequently, I have observed that one who is young in the Faith has a more secure grasp of grace than does one who claims many years of walking with the Master.

Paul instructs the Church in Rome to “welcome ... the one who is weak in the Faith.” His words challenge us to ask whether this church is a welcoming place. We grow comfortable with one another and we silently accept one another—even with all our flaws; but, are we prepared to make the stranger welcome among us? That Greek word translated into English by the word “welcome,” speaks of far more than merely greeting an individual. The word communicates the idea of taking someone along as a travelling companion; it speaks of receiving an individual into your home, or of accepting an individual into your circle of acquaintances.<sup>3</sup> This strong word is quite descriptive.

God has welcomed us [**ROMANS 14:3**] and Christ has welcomed us [**ROMANS 15:7**]. Therefore, as those who are welcomed in Christ, we are obligated to welcome one another. In particular, we are responsible to accept the one who is weak in the Faith. Applying the understanding we have from consideration of the normal use of the word, we are to include each other in our various activities, treating one another with respect.

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature** (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL 1957) 724

Paul's teaching should lead each Christian to question who is weak in the Faith. Should we actually think through this issue, we may be surprised at what we discover! Obviously Paul is not speaking of one who is timid or even of one who possesses little faith. The caution He provides has nothing to do with quantitating faith, nor even with whether the individual has but a rudimentary grasp of biblical theology. The Apostle is speaking of a fellow believer who struggles with how to express his or her convictions.

In the First Corinthian Letter, the Apostle urges believers to show consideration toward those who are weaker in the Faith. He focuses on the freedom we enjoy in this most Holy Faith, even as he reminds readers of the responsibility that accompanies our freedom in Christ. "Take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died" [1 CORINTHIANS 8:9-11].

Weakness in the Faith implies a weak conscience—a conscience that is easily offended by choices another might make. Weakness in the Faith is the exhibition of exaggerated scruples concerning issues of secondary importance, or even about issues of no importance whatsoever. At issue is not the doctrine held, but the freedom to exercise doctrine. Paul's concern is for the Christian who feels inhibited from specific actions. Paul is concerned with the manner of life, the expression of one's faith.

I appreciate J. B. Phillips' translation of the opening verse of our text. "Welcome a man whose faith is weak, but not with the idea of arguing over his scruples."<sup>4</sup> Focus on the individual's relationship with the Master, and not on her struggles with how to express her faith. Likewise, Eugene Peterson has summed up the Apostle's intent with his paraphrase of this verse. "Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with—even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently."<sup>5</sup> Treat them gently! Good advice for each believer.

So, what was the big issue that segregated the weak from the strong in Rome? There were actually two issues. The first was whether one should be vegetarian, or whether the Christian could eat anything, including meat purchased in the meat market. "One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables" [ROMANS 14:2].

The other issue was whether one was required to observe special holy days, or whether they could conduct their lives without special observance of such days. "One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike" [ROMANS 14:5]. These two issues loomed large in the minds of some of the congregation in Rome; and Christians then—just as in our day—fall on either side of these issues.

The strong realised that they were not under law, but under grace. Consequently, they tended to look down on the weaker Christians because of their exaggerated scruples. The weak felt that those who did not maintain their scruples were compromising the Faith, and so they despised the stronger Christians for their freedom.

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<sup>4</sup> J. B. Phillips, **The New Testament in Modern English** (Macmillan Co., New York, NY 1958, 1960)

<sup>5</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, **The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language** (NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO 1993, 2003)

Christians can appear to be very narrow; and thus seem to be always dumping on one another! The Apostle is teaching us that our great need is be getting on with our lives; especially do we need to be labouring at winning the lost. Too many Christians have become expert in destroying one another; and yet they have never won a single soul to the Faith of Christ the Lord. Such people need to change their behaviour.

Paul seems to be intentionally general in his characterisation of the problems and in his examples. This is because he is teaching a truth that can be applied rather broadly to the Christian life. In churches today, Christians anathematise one another on the basis of whether one smokes, whether one drinks wine with a meal, whether one goes to the movies, whether one reads a particular version of the Bible, whether one votes in a particular way—all the while the lost perish and Christians disgrace the Master through their self-centred manner of life.

During the early years of my walk with the Lord, I witnessed churches that destroyed young saints because of the length of their hair. Preachers actually preached sermons on the “sin” of wearing bell-bottom trousers. (Polyester leisure suits I could understand! But, bell-bottom pants?) Musical groups were debarred from performing in churches if they used taped accompaniment, taped accompaniment being considered evil. (Frankly, I thought that some of the pawing at an organ could come pretty close to evil.)

On one occasion I attended a pastoral conference in the city of San Francisco. Between nine hundred and a thousand preachers were present at one evening session. The primary speaker who had been brought in to address the assembly was a well-known pastor of a large mid-western congregation. As he preached, he sought to demonstrate his orthodoxy to the assembled preachers through announcing his strict adherence to what was generally accepted among them as fundamental principles.

“We won’t baptise a man with long hair,” he thundered. “We have a barber at the foot of the stairs to the baptistery. If a long-haired hippy wants to be baptised, we make him cut his hair.” The audience roared approval as almost all present shouted “Amen.”

I don’t know how he did it, but he singled me out. Out of that vast audience that evening, I was the only person present whose face was adorned with a dark, manly beard. Apparently overcome with the excitement of the moment and rising to the occasion, he leaned over that pulpit, pointed a boney finger right at my hirsute visage and shouted, “And we wouldn’t baptise a man with a beard, if only we could find it in the Bible!”

With that, I leapt out of my pew, lifted my hand high above my head and shouted, “Hallelujah, brother, you can’t find it.”

Startled, the Senior Pastor of my home church appeared to try to crawl under the pew. The audience was stunned into silence. The speaker sputtered and stammered and lost his train of thought. I did observe that we had a much more civil message from that point. That good man would have done well to consider Paul’s instruction before he began ranting about things that don’t matter—about “opinions” or “doubtful issues.”

How cruel we can be when we divide one another and pronounce judgement on one another. A brother or sister going through a hard time does not need our censure; they need our sympathy, our kindness, our gentle encouragement.

A fellow pastor phoned me one day. His wife was expecting their first child, but there were complications as she neared her term. The physicians had determined that the kidneys of the unborn child were not functioning. The parents were warned that the child would be stillborn. They were cautioned to prepare for the tragedy of death before life.

That pastor and his wife phoned the Director of Missions for their local Association. They wanted a pastor—someone who would pray with them and counsel them. That Director of Missions, reputed throughout the church world today to be a great man of prayer, came to the hospital room where that wife was confined to her bed, fearfully waiting the day of delivery with her husband.

“It is because you have unconfessed sin in your life,” he solemnly intoned, “that this child will be born dead.” His words were cruel, thoughtless, verging on wicked; and they were certainly presumptuous. The couple was stunned, and they were heart-broken.

Philip phoned me after that man had left and asked if I would come pray with them, which I gladly did. Hurrying to Grace Hospital, I wept with them and prayed with them, pleading with God to show mercy and goodness to them—and He did.

When that little girl was born, one kidney worked, though weakly. With each passing day, however, she gained strength and grew more beautiful. Today, Michelle is a beautiful young woman.

No Christian has a right to pronounce judgement, as did Job’s friends. Neither is any believer sufficiently wise to speak beyond that which God has delivered.

How much wiser we are when we meekly receive the instruction delivered in the Word of God. That Word teaches us that “We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to build him up” [ROMANS 15:1]. This obligation is strengthened in Peterson’s treatment of the same verse. “Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, ‘How can I help?’”<sup>6</sup>

Douglas Moo writes, “Paul is addressing an issue that we sometimes call a matter of the *adiaphora* (‘things indifferent’). The Scripture commands us to do certain things (e.g., to worship God), and it forbids us from doing certain other things (e.g., to commit adultery). But many other things are neither commanded nor prohibited—God’s people have the freedom to do them or not to do them. Should we use the King James Version of the Bible or the New International Version? Should we sing in church to an organ or with a guitar? The Bible does not say (though some Christians may think it does!).”<sup>7</sup>

**THE MASTER OF THE CHURCH** — I long for a day when each Christian will be counted as “strong.” I long for a day when each of us realises that we are responsible to treat one another with dignity and with respect. Though we are to hold one another accountable in love, that accountability does not extend to our opinions. Discuss and debate, but do not quarrel over private opinions. There is enough doctrinal truth to occupy us until Jesus returns; we do not need to argue about “doubtful issues.”

Paul used two examples of “doubtful issues”—dietary restrictions and observance of holy days. His response to these two controversies could be taken to mean that he did not care which side of the issue one came down on. While your point of view on either of the issues is not significant I do not think that is a proper understanding of what Paul is saying. Clearly, the Apostle does care about what God’s people do, especially when it is apparent that the actions of Christians do reflect upon the Person of the Lord Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup> Peterson, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> See Douglas J. Moo, **NIV Application Commentary: Romans** (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 2000) 452

The key to the biblical view is found in **ROMANS 14:9**: “To this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” Christ Jesus is Lord; thus, it is before our Master that we either stand or fall [see **VERSE FOUR**]. We are obligated to remember who the Master of the church is; consequently, we are to ensure that He is also Master of our own life.

Though we have been redeemed, we are yet fallen people. Because this is true, we are prone to exalt our own peculiar views on matters. Therefore, I find it necessary to state clearly that since He is Master, we are responsible to find His will in matters and then to do what He says. If He calls us to identify openly in baptism as those who believe, we cannot change the order and say that we are baptised in order to believe or that we will be baptised with a view to believing at some future time. If He calls us to obey our leaders, we cannot say that we will honour them if we feel like doing so. We must know His will and we must do what He commands.

My view on privately held opinions is unimportant. Likewise, what you think of “doubtful issues” really is not important. Some guidelines will assist us in finding the will of the Master in such issues, however.<sup>8</sup> The first of those three guidelines is found in **VERSE FIVE: Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind**. As a Christian you are a responsible, thinking person; you must make up your own mind. You are not condemned because you fall on one side or on the other of a “doubtful issue,” but you must work through all such matters on your own and be convinced of what is right.

Should you lift your hands when you sing? It is not important one way or the other; however, you must act in faith and with freedom. Should you eat out on a Sunday following church services? Ultimately, your decision does not affect your relationship to Christ; but you are responsible to think through the implications of your actions and make a reasoned decision. When you take a given action or adopt a particular course, you must be convinced and convicted in the basis for your actions.

The second guideline teaches that **Either decision still permits serving the Lord**. Paul writes, “The one who observes the day, observes it *in honour of the Lord*. The one who eats, eats *in honour of the Lord*, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains *in honour of the Lord* and gives thanks to God” [**VERSE SIX**]. On either side of “doubtful issues,” Christian act as they do (or at least they should act as they do) because they sincerely wish to honour the Lord.

We are taught that “The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” [**ROMANS 14:17**]. My faith does not consist of what I eat or drink, nor does it consist of where I worship or even whether I worship on a “holy day.” My faith is in Christ and I bear responsibility to honour Him in all things and to meet with Him in Spirit and in truth.

I read of a Catholic priest who was incarcerated during the Nazi reign of terror. This priest bemoaned the lack of accoutrements that would permit him to worship. I understand that he longed for the familiar vestments—the chalice and candles that marked his religious devotions. Let me state very clearly that I would not have a religion that did not permit me to worship at any time, regardless of where I was or what I had. Christians are responsible to bear the Spirit of holiness that permits them to worship at all times and in all places.

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<sup>8</sup> These guidelines are adopted from a sermon by James Montgomery Boice, in **Romans: The New Humanity: Romans 12-16** (Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1995) 1744-5

As you engage in any given action, you should ask yourself from time-to-time, “Am I really serving the Lord through this action?” I am not suggesting that you deceive yourself through submitting to form; but I am encouraging you to review your actions to ensure that your actions are carried out in honour of the Lord. Does Sunday really count for you in your Christian life? If Sunday counts, what about the other days? You are responsible to serve God each day. If your job does not permit you to serve God, perhaps you should find another job. For most of us, however, we need but think in order to transform our actions into those that honour the Master of life.

The third guideline is to **Ask whether you can be thankful**. In **VERSE SIX**, Paul speaks of serving the Lord three times and he speaks of giving thanks twice. If a fellow Christian recognises the Lord and is thankful to the Lord in performing an action, you need to get out of the way and let that thankful saint honour Him. Allow God to work in your sister or brother, and learn to give thanks for your own opportunity to serve freely.

At issue in discovering whether an action honours the Lord or not is whether you find pleasure without guilt. Of course, I do not mean the absence of guilt that attends a seared conscience or the absence of guilt that is characteristic of a psychopathic personality, but I do mean that in the normal course of events the impact of a given activity on our own life will be either neutral, or it will bring joy or guilt. If the activity is neutral, there is no sin attached to the action. If the activity brings guilt, stop it now! However, if the activity brings joy, give God thanks and continue heartily as to the Lord.

**THE JUDGE OF THE CHURCH** — The passage concludes with some rather sobering words. “Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,

‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,  
and every tongue shall confess to God.’

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God” [**ROMANS 14:10-12**].

In the text, Paul speaks of Christians appearing before the Judgement Seat of God—the *bema*. It may not be popular to say that we shall be judged—but we shall be judged! Judgement for the Christian is not a judicial action to determine whether that one will be saved or lost. Sin was judged at the cross of Calvary and the person who accepts that divine sacrifice will never again be judged because of his or her sin. However, every Christian must appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ—the *bema*.

The *bema* was the seat on which the referees sat during an athletic contest. From the *bema*, the referees rewarded those who did well in the contest, or they would disqualify those who broke the rules. The Bible speaks of this review of our actions on several occasions, encouraging us as Christians to make the effort to honour the Lord, knowing that we must appear before all Heaven to be rewarded for our service.

We are told, “We must all appear before the judgment seat [*bema*] of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” [**2 CORINTHIANS 5:10**]. Christians shall stand before Christ’s Judgement Seat where their lives will be revealed as open books. Either we will receive the commendation of Him who sees all things clearly and knows the heart, or we will be revealed as those who dishonoured Him through promoting our own self-interests.

Though the term *bema* occurs only in **ROMANS 14:10** and **2 CORINTHIANS 5:10**, the concept of the *bema* is apparent throughout Paul's writings. Christians can anticipate exposure of every motive so that God is glorified in all things.

For instance, Paul writes, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" [**1 CORINTHIANS 9:25-27**].

Again, the Apostle asserts, "I press on to make [the aforementioned aspects—the knowledge of Christ, the power of His resurrection, sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death] my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" [**PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14**].

Toward the end of his earthly life, Paul testified, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" [**2 TIMOTHY 4:7, 8**].

So, we must give an accounting. For what are we accountable? As I review the Word of God, I observe that **We are accountable for every word we have spoken**. Our Lord spoke of how our words reveal the condition of our heart. Then, for the benefit of all disciples, He appended this sobering thought. "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" [**MATTHEW 12:36, 37**].

Paul writes, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" [**EPHESIANS 4:29**]. He also cautioned, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving" [**EPHESIANS 5:4**]. Our words will either justify or condemn. Therefore, we must make every effort to build one another up; but know that God takes note of what is said and He shall honour those who honour Him, just as He shall hold us accountable for careless words. Malachi speaks of God's judgement for good when he writes, "Those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name" [**MALACHI 3:16**].

**We are accountable for the abilities God has given us.** Throughout the Gospels are several parables that tell either of the commendation of those who wisely used what they received from their Master, or telling of censure for those who squandered what they received [e.g. **LUKE 16:1-9; 19:11-27**]. What is evident is that each of us has received abilities and opportunities for which we are responsible. Our responsibility is not simply to make money or a comfortable living, but our responsibility is to honour the Lord.

Ask yourself these questions as you take inventory of your life. Who today is a Christian because of your witness? Who today is a better person because of the manner in which you have lived your life? As outsiders watch how you live, do they see the difference Christ has made? Whether you are wealthy or whether you live on a modest income, whether you own your own company or work for someone else, whether you have a brilliant mind or struggle to grasp complex concepts, you are nevertheless responsible to labour for Christ and for His glory.



**We are accountable for how we use our money.** Let me see your chequebook and I will tell you what you are. What you do with your money speaks volumes of who you are. Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” [MATTHEW 6:19-21]. Then, to drive the point home, the Master summarised with these words. “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” [MATTHEW 6:24].

**We are accountable to build one another.** This is the point of Paul’s instruction. When we are judging one another, we are not building one another. If we are trying to control one another, we are not strengthening one another. Worrying about how another conducts his or her life, we neglect our own life. Quit worrying about standards for others, live up to the standards God has given you. Let the elders do the shepherding.

Take an inventory of your own actions and of your own behaviour. Do those actions and does your behaviour reflect the presence of Christ the Lord? Make every effort to bring your life into line with the will of Christ, knowing that He is Master of the Body and knowing that you shall give an accounting before His Judgement Seat. In doing this, we can only make the church stronger and thus honour the Lord. Build one another in the Faith. Encourage one another. Make your brother and your sister stronger.

Of course, you cannot obey these injunctions if you are not a Christian. Reformation assumes a proper foundation, and if Christ the Lord is not the foundation for your life, you are even now under condemnation of Holy God. “No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” [1 CORINTHIANS 3:11] is the teaching we have received through the Word. Your first need is to be saved. To be saved, you must believe the message of life. That message calls you to believe that Christ died because of your sin and that He was raised from the dead to declare you free of guilt and to declare you righteous in the sight of the Father.

The Word of God calls you to life and to faith in these wonderful, exciting words, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” It concludes by promising that “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13]. The call of the Gospel is echoed by this congregation; believe the Son of God and be saved. Believe the message of life and be set free. Amen.