

“The Jerusalem Classroom”

Acts 15:22-35

September, 13, 2015

Intro: Have you ever had a class or “lesson” that taught you a lot... on the surface; BUT, over time, you came to realize that you had learned a whole lot more than your initially realized?

For many (if not most), such is the case when we look at the biblical account of what theologians call the “Jerusalem Council...”

Let’s review how we got here...

Acts 1-7	=	Jerusalem
Acts 8-12	=	Judea & Samaria
Acts 13+	=	Ends of the earth...
Acts 15	=	Dissension Discussion Decision Declaration Distribution

Acts 15 Context: v.1 = WAR!

- Dissension. (any & all false gospels)

(Dissension requires Discernment)

*** Scripture fed & Spirit led ***

- Discussion. (submit to God's Word)

Peter... Paul/Barnabas... James... Amos

- Decision. (eternal truth in love)

100% Gospel

Exclusivity of the Gospel

Celebration of the Gospel!

- Declaration. (THE Gospel alone saves)

- Distribution. (Great Commandments/Commission)

- T/S:**
- 1. Detect & Defend biblically**
 - 2. Define & Decipher biblically**
 - 3. Decide & Disciple biblically**

As we go through the passage...

Listen for the lessons to be learned & loved...

Watch out!

Warfare

Word

Worship

Wonder (of koinonia)

Walk

Lessons of:

BE-ing the Church

Christ-like confrontation

Ambassadorship of the Gospel

Ultimate authority of God's Word

Unity in diversity

Living out the 2 Great C's

BIBILICAL TEXT:

22** Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and **send them** to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, **leading men among the brothers,

23with the following letter: **“The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24**Since we have heard that **some men** have gone out from us and **troubled you** with words, **unsettling** your souls/minds, although we gave them no instructions, **25**it has seemed good to us, having come to **one accord**, to choose men and **send them** to you with **our beloved** Barnabas and (**our beloved**) Paul, **26**men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **27**We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will **tell you the same things** by word of mouth. **28**For it has seemed good to **the Holy Spirit and to us** to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:

***** Corporate Communion *****

Acts 15:6-12a: *The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. 7And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 9and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. 10Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” 12And all the assembly fell silent,*

29that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. **31** And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. **32** And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. **33** And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those (brothers) who had sent them.

35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Magnify the Lord

Ephesians 1: 3 & 13

3*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...*

13*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,*

Mortify the Lie

Galatians 1:6-9

Monopolize the Truth

Ephesians 2:8-10

8*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9**not by works, so that no one can boast. **10**For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:13-18

13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **15**by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, **16**and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. **17**He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. **18**For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Mobilize the Ministry

Ephesians 3:6

6This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

1 John 3:18

John 20:21

Ephesians 4:1-6

Unity in the Body of Christ

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, *2* with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, *3* eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *4* There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— *5* one Lord, one faith, one baptism, *6* one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Multiply the Missionaries

Acts 1:8

Ephesians 5:6-11

6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. **7**Therefore do not become partners with them; **8**for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... **10**and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. **11**Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Matthew 28:18-20

2 Timothy 2:1-4

A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus

1You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, **2**and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. **3**Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. **4**No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

Ephesians 6:10-20

The Whole Armor of God

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. **11**Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **12**For we

do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

T/S: Lessons of:

BE-ing the Church
Christ-like confrontation
Ambassadorship of the Gospel
Ultimate authority of God's Word
Unity in diversity
Living out the 2 Great C's



One FAITH. One FAMILY. One FOCUS.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will BE My witnesses (locally, regionally, and globally).” – Acts 1:8

One Question: *WHAT DO YOU WANT?*

One Offer: *COME AND SEE.*

One Promise: *TRUTH IN LOVE!*

Our Truth-in-Love Distinctives: We are...

- 1.** Responding to grace & repenting of sin...
- 2.** Trusting the Bible & obeying God’s Word...
- 3.** Growing in-Christ & living Spirit-led...
- 4.** Praying for guidance & following by faith...
- 5.** Dying to self & carrying our cross...
- 6.** BE-ing the Church & loving one another...(*truly loving* one another)
- 7.** Equipping the saints & exemplifying supernatural unity...
- 8.** Ministering as ambassadors & discerning matters shrewdly...
- 9.** Worshipping God vertically & experiencing Him horizontally...
- 10.** Proclaiming the Gospel (*no matter what*) & fishing for men...
- 11.** Making disciplined-warriors & winning spiritual-warfare...
- 12.** Loving our King & serving His kingdom!

CLOSE:

Ephesians 3:14-19

14For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
15from whom every family in heaven and on earth is
named, **16**that according to the riches of his glory he may
grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit
in your inner being, **17**so that Christ may dwell in your
hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded
in love, **18**may have strength to comprehend with all the
saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth
(of His love), **19**and to know the love of Christ that
surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the
fullness of God.

VIDEO: “Warrior”

Let's Pray!

The Jerusalem Council. A conference was held in Jerusalem (c. A.D. 48 or 49) to discuss conditions for Gentile membership in the church. The issue was raised by the “Pharisaic” wing of the Jerusalem church ([vv. 1-5](#)); the Gentile mission was defended by Peter ([vv. 6-11](#)); a solution was proposed by James ([vv. 12-21](#)); and an official agreement was reached ([vv. 22-35](#)). The fact that James is key to the resolution shows that the Jewish and Gentile believers were less divided than some try to make them. Those who complained here were on the fringe of the church, and their hard line view was rejected.

ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version.

REVIEW:

Bible

Acts

Ch.15

- vv.1-2: Promblem
- v.6: Koinonia
- vv.8-11: Peter
- v.12: Paul & Barny
- v.15: James
- vv.16-18: Amos 9:11-12 & Isaiah 45:21
- vv.19-21: “Weaker Brother Principle”

TEXT: **Acts 15:22-35 (NASB)**

²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul

and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

- “Then” = chronological link to vv.1-21
- “good to the apostles, elders, whole church”
 - “Ekklesia in Koinonia”
 - See the Spirit’s unified leading
 - ONE Spirit has implications:
 - Unified hearing... OR
 - Someone’s hearing wrong!
- “choose men...to send” = Great Commission!
- WHO DO WE SEND?
 - Paul & Barnabas = “giants”
 - Judas & Silas = “leading men”
 - God sends His best!
 - “leading men” = military term...
 - God calls, makes, sends warriors!
- “among the brothers” = contrasts “some men”
 - NOTE: see how many times the reference to “brothers” is made after v.1 where “some men” are identified as rouge

²³ *and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.*

- “they sent this letter”
 - See the intentionality... (they SENT)
 - See the priority... (they SENT)
 - See the specificity... (sent this LETTER)
- The letter’s CONTENT:
 - Jerusalem Jews send greetings to the gentiles
 - Jews in Jerusalem call Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, & Cilicia... “brothers”

²⁴ *"Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls,*

- v.24 explains reason for the letter...
- “Since we heard” = demonstration of Christian character... We see a wrong & we fix it. We make a mistake, we apologize. If the group that we are in messes up, we clean it up!
- “some of our number” = those “from” here that are not really “of” here...
 - Visible vs. Invisible church/Church
 - While everyone in the family carries the family name (witness), not everyone has the authority to speak on the family’s behalf (signet ring).

- “to whom we gave no instruction/authority”
 - This phrase exposes “some men” of v.1...
 - Misrepresented themselves...
 - Manipulated relations
 - Manipulated assumptions
 - This phrase enlightens the brothers...
 - Liars are not leaders!
 - Leaders are not liars!
 - Beware the wolves!!!
- “have disturbed you”
 - The Jerusalem Council is officially recognizing the damaging “disturbance” the divisive detractors unleashed with their lies
- “with their words”
 - Never underestimate the devastating & destructive power of a poisonous tongue...
 - When poisonous tongues craft the conversations coming out of a cunning minds, casualties abound.
 - Warring words wound!
 - Wolf-words are like gun-bullets... they have but one purpose, to HIT their target.
- “unsettling your souls”
 - Hence, Ephesians 4:15 (“truth in love”)
 - Evil enemies: “unsettle”
 - Evil enemies: “stir up”
 - KEY: the enemy of your soul (and all of his minions) will try to “unsettle” your soul from that

which is true & trustworthy.
Conversely, & simultaneously,
the enemies of your soul will try
to “stir up” agitation against
that which should be left
alone...

- “UNSETTLED” = military overtones...
 - Means to plunder...
 - Means to overtake...
 - Means to bankrupt... to empty
 - Means to devastate, if not destroy

²⁵ *it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,*

- See the Church in one-accord... UNIFIED
- See the Church... Do the right thing!
- See the righteous Ekklesia in Koinonia!
- NOTE: the Jerusalem Church is modeling:
 - Seeking the Spirit’s lead...
 - Sending out truth...
 - Standing unified...
 - Selecting & Sending set-apart ones...
 - Serving by sending...
 - Sacrificial sending...

- Sending Super-servants

²⁶ *men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- Paul & Barnabas are recognized Ambassadors!
- Paul & Barnabas are famously zealous...
 - “risked their lives” = living “ALL in”
 - “for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”
 - A name worth dying for...
 - No rationalizations...
 - No compromises...
 - It’s a privilege to serve/suffer!
- Paul & Barnabas have died to self, and are now living in & for Christ... Consequently, they do not fear death or anything this world can threaten them with...
 - See here the model for missionaries.
 - Now, note that EVERY Christian is called & created to be a missionary:
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - Acts 1:8
 - John 20:21
 - See again Paul & Barny’s model...
- Do not miss the Council’s acknowledgment:
 - Jesus is LORD!
 - Jesus is CHRIST!
 - Jesus is their personal LORD & Christ!

²⁷ *"Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.*

- Military precision & priority = sending people
- See the confirming unity of message & mission!

²⁸ *"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:*

- See UNITY of Church & Holy Spirit...
- See One Spirit, One Church, One VOICE!
- NOTE: all division of vision or voice is wrong...
- Emphasis is on LIVING in UNITY :-)

²⁹ *that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves*

*free from such things, you will do well.
Farewell."*

- Reiterating the “weaker brother” principles...
- See 1 Corinthians 8-9
- See Romans 14-15

³⁰ So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

- We heard the plan in verses 22-29...
- Now in v.30, the plan becomes a reality...
- Planning without doing is dreaming/wishing...
- NOTE: “congregation together” = unity unity!

³¹ When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

- Clarification of the gospel IS “good news!”
- True gospel lovers... love the gospel!
- Pure gospel empowers & encourages Christians!

- “encourage-ment” = bring courage in action
-

³² *Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.*

- Judas & Silas:
 - Prophets = God’s truth-tellers
 - Carriers of Courage!
 - Servants that Strengthen the Saints!
 - Preachers that actually PREACH...
 - NOTE: no sermonettes...
- Contrast Judas & Silas with “some men”

³³ *After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out.*

- See the relational component: “spent time there”
- See “brothers” emphasized again...
- See the bond of peace emphasized with brothers
- See the fluidity of Christians in THE one Church
- One Faith, One Family, One Focus!

³⁴ *[But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.]*

- [not preached per lack of canonical evidence]

³⁵ *But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.*

- NOTE: “one Church” with multiple locations...
- See what Paul & Barny are doing/BE-ing:
 - Teaching & Preaching...
 - Differentiate Indicatives & Imperatives
 - Teach + Preach + Apply = EQUIP

The progress of the Gospel has often been hindered by people with closed minds who stand in front of open doors and block the way for others. In 1786, when William Carey laid the burden of world missions before a ministerial meeting in Northampton, England, the eminent Dr. Ryland said to him, 'Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine!' More than one Spirit-filled servant of God has had to enter open doors of opportunity without the support of churches and religious leaders.

Paul and his associates faced this same challenge at the Jerusalem Conference about twenty years after Pentecost. Courageously, they defended both the truth of the Gospel and the missionary outreach of the church. There were three stages in this event.

The Dispute (Acts 15:1-5)

The Defense (Acts 15:6-18)

The Decision (Acts 15:19-35)

The leaders and the whole church ([Acts 15:22](#)), directed by the Holy Spirit ([Acts 15:28](#)), made a twofold decision; a doctrinal decision about salvation, and a practical decision about how to live the Christian life.

The doctrinal decision we have already examined. The church concluded that Jews and Gentiles are all sinners before God and can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ. There is one need, and there is but one Gospel to meet that need ([Gal. 1:6-12](#)). God has today but one program: He is calling out a people for His name. Israel is set aside but not cast away ([Rom. 11:1ff](#)); and when God's program for the church is completed, He will begin to fulfill His kingdom promises to the Jews.

But all doctrine must lead to duty. James emphasized this in his epistle ([James 2:14-26](#)), and so did Paul in his letters. It is not enough for us simply to accept a biblical truth; we must apply it personally in everyday life. Church problems are not solved by passing resolutions, but by practicing the revelations God gives us from His Word.

James advised the church to write to the Gentile believers and share the decisions of the conference. This letter asked for obedience to two *commands* and a willingness to agree to two personal *concessions*. The two commands were that the believers avoid idolatry and immorality, sins that were especially prevalent among the Gentiles (see [1 Cor. 8-10](#)). The two concessions were that they willingly abstain from eating blood and meat from animals that had died by strangulation. The two commands do not create any special problems, for idolatry and immorality have always been wrong in God's sight, both for Jews and Gentiles. But what about the two concessions concerning food?

Keep in mind that the early church did a great deal of eating together and practicing of hospitality. Most churches met in homes, and some assemblies held a "love feast" in conjunction with the Lord's Supper ([1 Cor. 11:17-34](#)). It was probably not much different from our own potluck dinners. If the Gentile believers ate food that the Jewish believers considered "unclean," this would cause division in the church. Paul dealt clearly with this whole problem in [Romans 14-15](#).

The prohibition against eating blood was actually given by God before the time of the Law ([Gen. 9:4](#)), and it was repeated by Moses ([Lev. 17:11-14](#); [Deut. 12:23](#)). If an animal is killed by strangulation, some of the blood will remain in the body and make the meat unfit for Jews to eat. Hence, the admonition against strangulation. "Kosher" meat is meat that comes from clean animals that have been killed properly so that the blood has been totally drained from the body.

It is beautiful to see that this letter expressed the loving unity of people who had once been debating with each other and defending opposing views. The legalistic Jews willingly gave up insisting that the Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved, and the Gentiles willingly accepted a change in their eating habits. It was a loving compromise that did not in any way affect the truth of the Gospel. As every married person and parent knows, there are times in a home when compromise is wrong, but there are also times when compromise is right. Wise Samuel Johnson said, "Life cannot subsist in society but by reciprocal concessions." The person who is always right, and who insists on having his or her own way, is difficult to live with happily.

What did this decision accomplish in a practical way? At least three things. First, it strengthened the unity of the church and kept it from splitting into two extreme "Law" and "grace" groups. President Eisenhower called the right kind of compromise "all of the usable surface. The extremes, right or left, are in the gutters." Again, this is not *doctrinal* compromise, for that is always wrong ([Jude 3](#)). Rather, it is learning to give and take in the practical arrangements of life so that people can live and work together in love and harmony.

Second, this decision made it possible for the church to present a united witness to the lost Jews ([Acts 15:21](#)). For the most part, the church was still identified with the Jewish synagogue; and it is likely that in some cities, entire synagogue congregations believed on Jesus Christ—Jews, Gentile proselytes, and Gentile "God-fearers" together. If the Gentile believers abused their freedom in Christ and ate meat containing blood, this would offend both the saved Jews and their unsaved Mends whom they

were trying to win to Christ It was simply a matter of not being a stumbling block to the weak or to the lost ([Rom. 14:13-21](#)).

Third, this decision brought blessing as the letter was shared with the various Gentile congregations. Paul and Barnabas, along with Judas and Silas, took the good news to Antioch; and the church rejoiced and was encouraged because they did not have to carry the burdensome yoke of the Law ([Acts 15:30-31](#)). On his second missionary journey, Paul shared the letter with the churches he had founded on his first missionary journey. The result was a strengthening of the churches' faith and an increase of their number ([Acts 16:5](#)).

We today can learn a great deal from this difficult experience of the early church. To begin with, problems and differences are opportunities for growth just as much as temptations for dissension and division. Churches need to work together and take time to listen, love, and learn. How many hurtful fights and splits could have been avoided if only some of God's people had given the Spirit time to speak and to work.

Most divisions are caused by "followers" and "leaders." A powerful leader gets a following, refuses to give in on even the smallest matter, and before long there is a split. Most church problems are not caused by doctrinal differences but by different viewpoints on practical matters. What color shall we paint the church kitchen? Can we change the order of the service? I heard of one church that almost split over whether the organ or the piano should be on the right side of the platform!

Christians need to learn the art of loving compromise. They need to have their priorities in order so they know when to fight

for what is really important in the church. It is sinful to follow some impressive member of the church who is fighting to get his or her way on some minor issue that is not worth fighting about. Every congregation needs a regular dose of the love described in [1 Corinthians 13](#) to prevent division and dissension.

As we deal with our differences, we must ask, "How will our decisions affect the united witness of the church to the lost?" Jesus prayed that His people might be united so that the world might believe on Him ([John 17:20-21](#)). Unity is not uniformity, for unity is based on love and not law. There is a great need in the church for diversity in unity ([Eph. 4:1-17](#)), for that is the only way the body can mature and do its work in the world.

God has opened a wonderful door of opportunity for us to take the Gospel of God's grace to a condemned world. But there are forces in the church even today that want to close that door. There are people who are preaching "another gospel" that is not the Gospel, of Jesus Christ.

Help keep that door open—and reach as many as you can!

Be daring!

Bible Exposition Commentary - Bible Exposition
Commentary – Be Daring (Acts 13-28).

What's the Difference Between Teaching and Preaching?

*FROM R.C. Sproul Jr. Jun 16, 2012 Category:
Articles*

Like prose and poetry, these two terms are better understood as opposite ends of a spectrum, rather than raw opposites. When we write prose we are given to sundry poetic devices, word-plays, metaphors, etc. and when we write poetry we are communicating information. In like manner it is rather difficult if not impossible to teach without preaching to some degree, or to preach without some level of teaching.

One way to illustrate the distinction however is to note the difference between the indicative and the imperative. The former tells us what is, the latter tells us what we're supposed to do. Teaching, obviously, tends toward the indicative while preaching tends toward the imperative. But what if we made the distinction absolute? Would not any teaching utterly bereft of any imperative cause us to yawn, to reply, "So what?" In like manner, were we to drain preaching of all indicative, and be left with only imperative, would we not have sermons that merely shout, "Do something!"? Would it not end up sound

and fury, signifying nothing?

Which means, in the end, that these are each matters of degree. I am blessed to be able to teach at Reformation Bible College. Because my desire for my students is that they would grow in grace and wisdom it is not my design to merely download information from my brain to theirs. My classes therefore tend to follow a real, though unplanned pattern. It usually happens that I spend roughly two thirds of my class time giving and explaining information. Then, in the final third of class I tend to commence to preaching. I begin to exhort my students to live in light of what they have learned, to change their perspectives, and their lives. I begin to implore them to change their hearts.

I am blessed also, though not as often as I would like to be, to preach. Here I certainly have an obligation, as best as I am able, to explain the text. I seek to place the text in its historical context. I try to clear up any grammatical ambiguities, or translation issues. But, persuaded that the Bible is not some odd and mysterious book that isn't eminently understandable, believing that our problems are more moral than intellectual, that we are more foolish than stupid, I exhort the congregation to believe, to trust, to rejoice, to give thanks, to love, to forgive. Every Sunday when I am blessed to preach I walk into the pulpit not only hoping to be true to the text, but hoping to encourage

growth in godliness. I want the flock to go away persuaded that in Christ they are beloved of the Father, and that Jesus changes everything.

We who are Reformed tend to be stronger teachers than preachers. The non-Reformed tend to be stronger preachers than teachers. We agree with the Bible, but remain unmoved by it. They are quick to be moved, but not always by the Bible. The Bible is not just filled with truth. It is filled with truth that ought to change us. It isn't enough that we are taught the Bible. We need the Bible preached.