

PREFACE

*“Though my name has the word ‘Paul’ in it, I did not know the meaning of ‘Paul’ until today. I chose this name because I was awed by him. But I did not understand why Paul adopted this name. He is anything but little. To me, he is so big-hearted and so huge – I mean in the role God had raised him for, especially as pastor showed it to me today. His star must be the biggest and brightest, besides Christ Yeshua’s of course. I enjoyed today’s preaching very much. It is like taking a ten-course dinner. The appetizer is already delectable enough when pastor introduced the book of Acts. He said while the four Gospels are about the ministry of Yeshua Christ on earth, the book of Acts is about the ministry of Yeshua Christ after His ascension. When He ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Comforter, hence, the book of Acts is not only about the ministry of the Apostles but also about the ministry of the Holy Ghost (Acts 15:28 & 13:4). The next course aroused my curiosity. This is when pastor asked, was it right for Peter to arrange for the appointment of the 12th apostle (Acts 1) or should he have waited for the Holy Ghost’s direction? The most satisfying dish came near the end when pastor showed us that what Peter did was indeed the mind of the Holy Spirit: to complete the twelve apostolic offices (the number twelve represents the Church) and hence, Paul could be considered as the 13th apostle (the apostle to the Gentiles). In between, there were other courses that were very nice too. From Galatians 2, pastor helped me to see that the mindset of Peter and the other apostles were so deeply rooted in the culture of works of the law, such as circumcision; hence they were actually not clear about the Gospel. It took Paul to show them that salvation is by grace and not works (Galatians 2:16); Peter later acknowledged that Paul was right (2 Peter 3:15,16). Today, I understand why God had to raise up someone who had a colossal mind and understand the Jews as in the person of Paul. God arranged that he should spend a long time of 14 years in Tarsus (Galatians 2:1) and 3 years in Mt Sinai (Galatians 1:18) to study the Scriptures and really understand what the Gospel is (Galatians 1:12). God also revealed His Son in him (Galatians 1:16) so that he could defend and define the Gospel of the grace of God. The elect in the Jewish church should be very thankful to him, for in a way, Paul had actually saved them. I should also be very thankful to him because it is from his epistles that **pastor gives us this only Gospel that can save**. I am thankful many of the distinctives of our church define this Gospel of Paul which is the Gospel of pastor such as the role of the law, the role of woman, the calling of a preacher, the Sabbath being on the first day of the week.”* Pauline Soh. *“Every of pastor’s message is very astounding—the thoroughness, the depth, the spirituality, the comprehensiveness. Every truth that pastor brings across is a marvel; he could even read in between the lines and the chapters. This morning, he presented to us the greatness of Paul from the book of Acts. When the Jewish leaders such as Peter and James could not really define the Gospel, and were wondering whether circumcision should be part of the Gospel (Acts 15), Paul did it with great flair and elegance. He showed that whether it be the Gospel of the circumcised or of the uncircumcised, there is no difference whatsoever but only one Gospel. Paul kept a low profile. Though he knew so much about the Gospel, he was not assertive. When a crisis arose or when circumstances allowed, Paul in all his calmness and firmness, would assert his doctrines clearly and promptly because it has to do with the purity of the Gospel. It is shocking to hear pastor say that Paul’s defence of and contention for the Gospel is not so much with the heathen or the unbelieving Jews but with the leaders of the Jewish church. It is also interesting to note from pastor’s sermon that at the beginning, probably Paul did not really appreciate Luke duly because Luke was not close to him. Besides, Luke also kept a low profile. It was Luke who followed and recorded Paul’s life and ministry. There was poignancy when Paul reflected back and had to record that only Luke was with him at the end (2 Timothy 4:11). When Paul was defending the Gospel, many people could not appreciate the exceptional grace that was in him. So it is today, many churches also could not see the exceptional grace that is in pastor who rediscovers the Gospel of the Scriptures for us. I was brought to see the wickedness of our hearts and of our times if we cannot recognise nor acknowledge the exceptional calling and grace in pastor at this time of the greatest apostasy.”* Julia Low. *The foregoing Sabbath vespers were in response to pastor’s sermon, ‘Acts Of The Apostles: The Ministry And Life Of Paul, The Thirteenth Apostle’, Johor Baru, Malaysia; 14 November AD 2010*