

PREFACE

“Greetings, pa. Thank God for the excuse of Israel’s graduation to steal a chance to visit Broadstairs, Kent and renew our fellowship with the English brethren on their turf. The icing on the cake was the gift of Zephaniah Soh at the eleventh hour! It was a rather pleasant ride on the National Rail as we traversed through the serene English countryside to the south-eastern coastal towns. I was glad to see all the folks, and all the Chew’s and Harper’s arrows in the quiver. The house was never quiet. I was impressed by the faith of both these families and the Hunters. It is not easy to support a large brood – even as I beheld Hananiah Chew working 12-hour shifts and straightaway joining us for worship and Daniel Harper’s struggle to find a good plot of land for communal living. It is also rather tiring for the mothers to be constantly taking care of the children. However, I am reminded of your preaching on the verse, ‘Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.’ Proverbs 14:4. The English are known for putting on a dignified front at all times, even when circumstances warrant desperation. Perhaps, unlike America, where the mess is played out publicly, the English like to give the impression that ‘the crib is clean’. Unfortunately, as you pointed out, the crib is far from clean, it is ‘on the edge’! In stark contrast, the crib of the brethren might be messy for now, but I pray that much increase be given to them in their vision for the advancement of the Reformed faith. Thank God too for the privilege to see Des and Lois.

Thank God that because of the gift in the person of Zephaniah, the primacy, in our trip, was given to preaching. The conveyance of your preaching on the book of Job reinforces the doctrine that we have been discussing these few weeks – the doctrine of Justification By Faith. Thank God that this year the Holy Spirit led you to diligently seek out the point of time in which Job was justified. If the discourse between Job and his three friends centred around how should man be just with God, then to seek to find out the point of time in which Job was justified is apropos. Thank God for the words in Job 42:9-10; God ‘accepted Job’ and turned the captivity of Job. I felt this affirms your ministry on Justification By Faith. It is not when Job was devout, perfect or upright that he was saved, it was not even when he abhorred himself in dust and ashes (Job 42:5-6) but it was when the LORD sovereignly accepted him (also it is no coincidence that it happened when Job exercised forgiveness towards his brethren). As Sarah Harper said, it is a hard thing to grasp if we do not know the Gospel that you have been preaching. Personally, because you have drilled me in the doctrines of Preparatory Work and the Sovereignty of God, that there was acquiescence to the message. However, as we discussed the message later on, I understood the difficulty that Des and OT were having with the message as well. One uncle used to say, ‘We are born Arminians.’ It is hard to shake the belief that a man who does good is undoubtedly justified. How could a perfect, upright man who eschewed evil and even was God’s boasting be unsaved?! However, as was later discussed, if we read the whole Scriptures, God justifies sovereignly and not when a man is doing good. Other examples given were Abraham and Cornelius. That being said, I also thank God for the warning to beware of being Job’s friends. It is frightening that Satan can use the right doctrines to fatally misapply it in situations (and as we consider how Satan even used the Word of God to provoke the Lord Yeshua Christ). We must refrain from being definitive about a person’s justification: First, only God knows. Second, God has appointed Elihus to be the authorized interpreters of His Word and work. Nevertheless, I thank God for the encouragement for the seeking sinner in Job 13:18. While Job was probably a model seeking sinner, yet I felt encouraged that those who walk in the commandments of God can hold on to the promises of God. The exhortation on Psalm 143 came in time as I see myself so far from the spirit of the Psalmist ‘whose spirit faileth’ because of the enemy. It is striking that the Psalmist could cry this way even as a saved man. How much more should I be crying as an unjustified person? In this Laodicean age, it is so hard to cry out like the Psalmist. But, if I do not cry, I will go down to the pit. In this trip, there was the sense of desperation because I saw the state of the youths, including myself. Though we have been brought up in the house of God, how many of us will really make it to heaven? The odds are stacked against us – liberalism is prevalent not only in the world but worse, in the house of God. I saw my stubbornness in not giving up my sins. I saw the youths graduating, they think they are wise and deem preaching to be foolishness. Immorality is glorified as intellectual and progressive. But, of a truth, this world is regressing. Yet, where is the desperation?

I also thank God for Zephaniah’s conveyance titled ‘Coming Home’. There is the need for the Lots to come back to the Abrahams and for the John Marks to come back to the Pauls. Importantly, there must be the conviction of the need to come home. Also, coming home does not mean physically as much as spiritually. Personally, I am convicted of the need to come home to my spiritual father. I know that if I don’t come home, I will be swallowed up. I thank God for the bond that God has created between you and I. Although when I was younger, I thought it is mainly because you are my physical father and I am forced to live with you! But, more and more, I see that it is the mercies of God. Deborah Thomas once commented that she is amazed that when anything happens, you are the first one I call (unlike many others who have ‘mediators’), even if I

get scolded. In a sense, like Paul the apostle said, we need to experimentally know who our spiritual father is, though many may have watered us. And, we need to keep going back, especially to get scolded. Coming home is not easy because there is the need to submit to the spiritual father. I pray for the grace of obedience to submit.” Ruth Mary Thomas, Teaneck, NJ, USA; 5 August 2015 AD