

PREFACE

“Greetings, pa. Thanks for sending along the Year End Reports and Summaries for 2017 for Westminster Tradition. The world was flabbergasted and in chaos in 2017 AD. Change, both for better and for worse, swept through the countries as governing parties changed hands. For us in The Westminster Tradition, there were migrations, journeyings, arrivals and departures. Yet, in the midst of the pandemonium and changes, the constant is the faithfulness of God in unctioning you by the Holy Spirit to preach to us. Whether in Asia or the Americas, you preached the word, in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all long suffering and doctrine. 2 Timothy 4:2. It reminded me of your message on Joel that when the world is in chaos, the church tends to be restored and refreshed.

The sermons were all deep, rich and inexhaustible. Yet, in the midst of them, some themes stood out. (1) The Hopeless Situation. In not a few messages these year, you ended by saying that God is warning us that based on the cycles of history, there is no hope left for impertinent people like us. You chided the brethren who in their responses tried to carve out silver linings to the hopeless situation. Drawing from the examples of Israel and Judah, you showed us that despite the ‘breaks’ that God would give His people including good priests, good kings and good prophets, yet the people of God did not repent. They remained in the bondage of the will, condemned to eternal captivity. It reminded me that we love to claim on the promises of the Gospel but we do not want to sojourn in the valley of humiliation. (2) The Minor Prophets. I have never appreciated them as much as I did this year. The icing on the cake was the back-to-back sermons from the book of Micah and Nahum. You drew treasures out of these pithy books. First, as the centre books of the Bible (No. 33 and 34), they encapsulate a central message of the Bible: redemption versus condemnation. Who does the redemption come to? Micah shows us that it is to those in Judah. Nahum shows that the condemnation comes to those in heathendom and apostate Israel, the realm of Satan and the Antichrist. From Genesis to Revelation, you substantiated the principles from these two books. I was thankful that Zechariah Tan was around to bear the brunt of responding (excellently) to pastor’s message. (3) Principles of Interpretation. This year, you didn’t just give us a fish but taught us to fish. You provided principles of interpretation of prophecy that whetted my appetite to read the books, especially the prophetic books. Apart from the four-fold interpretations, you showed us that we needed to think about who the addressors and addressees are. Although we do not have the anointing and discernment, we should not use that as a crutch to hide our laziness of the mind and dullness of spiritual senses. (4) Paulinism. Of course, your favorite expositions came from the Pauline epistles. Reading the reports this year, the doctrine of Justification by Faith scored a hat-trick and was preached in all three conferences. However, the doctrine, especially The Role of The Law, was adduced not only from the epistles but from the Old Testament and the books of the Gospels. Even in the books of the Gospels, Christ taught from both the Law and the Gospel. There is the Role of the Law in the doctrine of Justification by Faith. And, if this doctrine is the centre of Paulinism and Paulinism is the centre of Western civilization, then it is for me to study it and pray that I understand both the letter and the spirit of the doctrine.

Personally, this year for me marked my first full year as a mother. For lack of a better cliché, it is not easy to be a mom. But, what I found even harder was being able to attentively listen to preaching as a mom of an infant (who started running at 9 months). There were many times when nature called just when you were getting to the crux of the message! So, while the world celebrates the #MeToo movement this year, my ‘heroes’ are the parents who are able to attentively listen and respond to preaching and the parents who ‘drag’ their children to the place of preaching by hook or by crook. I look at the likes of Zechariah Tan and Sarah Harper (with Baby Jeiel in tow) whose responses go from strength to strength; I also look at the likes of my dad and others who despite not in Singapore are incessantly checking to make sure every youngster is found at the means of grace. This may be to the chagrin of the youngsters yet it is to the saving of their soul. These gives me encouragement to press on in catching the letter and spirit of pastor’s sermons weekly, to respond commensurately, and to pull along those under me, including Isaiah Thomas Lovelace in doing so. Blessed New Year 2018 AD!” Ruth Thomas Lovelace, Teaneck, NJ, USA; 10 January 2018 AD