

**PREFACE**

*“Last night I was very troubled by the message as it was a solemn and heavy one and I ruminated much on it. I give thanks to God very much for the role of the Holy Spirit that pastor preached from Acts 1. Before He ascension, Christ had promised to send the Holy Ghost soon after His ascension. This does not mean that the Holy Ghost was not moving and working in the Old Testament times. It is that the Holy Ghost came down in a very special manner during Pentecost, to give exceptional unction to the preachers to fulfil the Great Commission to spread the Gospel across all the earth. For that purpose the Holy Spirit was vested upon first the 120 in the Upper Room and then the other evangelists. I was very struck that the Holy Ghost is not just given to help them and us spread the Gospel throughout the world but the promise is also to the end of time. Throughout the history of the New Testament, we can always witness the works of the Holy Ghost. I was very struck when pastor showed us that besides the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost in Pentecost, there is also the election of the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot in Acts 1. This is especially significant because as pastor spoke later on concerning the ministry of Paul, he showed us Paul was not raised up to replace Judas. His place was filled by Matthias (as recorded in chapter 1). The 12 were raised as apostles to the circumcision. The ministry of Paul therefore is a special ministry. He is to be considered as the 13<sup>th</sup> apostle and God has raised him up as the apostle to the Gentiles. According to the prophecies, with the en masse rejection of the Jews, there is also the coming in of the Gentiles; the middle wall of partition is pulled down and there is neither Jew nor Greek in the house of God. The focus in the earlier parts of the book of Acts are the mighty works of the Spirit of God unctioning Peter and the other evangelists, deacons like Stephen and Philip were granted the special unction to preach the Gospel. But subsequently, we see a shift in the focus to the ministry of Paul. There is that special measure of unction upon Paul the apostle as recorded by Luke. **It was striking when pastor said God raised up Paul not only as the apostle to the Gentiles but to define and defend the doctrine of Justification by Faith. At that time there was a problem; the apostles were vague concerning this doctrine. It is one thing to say we are not justified by works but by grace; it is another thing to have understanding of the full mechanics of this doctrine, without which we not much different from the Arminians who emphasise we are saved by Christ alone but put confidence in works. God had raised up Paul to define the doctrine of Justification by Faith and all the mechanics thereof, including not just how a man is justified but also when a man is justified.** Also Paul made clear the doctrine of Federal Headship and Imputation, which others cannot really understand. It was very significant why Paul is so specific in naming this doctrine ‘Justification by Faith’ and not by grace – that as much as justification is by Christ, there is a place for the exercise of faith and pastor quoted Hebrews 10:39 and Habakkuk 2:4 that the just shall live by faith and man is justified by Christ. There is a place for us to keep on believing till the saving of our souls. The Jewish apostles knew salvation was by Christ but were still holding on to their Jewish traditions and laws, amalgamating and alloying the Gospel. They were very vague concerning this doctrine. Therefore, God raised up Paul in a very extraordinary manner to define it. It is striking when pastor showed us that Paul’s ministry, calling, and understanding of the Gospel, is not by man, but a revelation by Yeshua Christ personally (as pastor emphasised to us from Galatians 1). Paul spent only 15 days with the apostles and thereafter he spent the rest of the years alone. The depth of his understanding of this doctrine of Justification by Faith came directly from God. Due to the significance of the message and the doctrines Paul was preaching, he had a great measure of the unction of the Spirit of God so that he was able to turn the world upside down and preach the Gospel in wisdom and accuracy to different audiences (the Jews, Athenians, or unbelievers) and applying it appropriately and penetratively in various contexts. The measure of his uniqueness was witnessed by people such as Felix, Agrippa and Festus. It was quite striking the way Agrippa came to see Paul. He knew how special Paul was. It was as if Festus told his wife, ‘I know I promised to bring you to the restaurant but this one (the preacher Paul) is better.’ Agrippa also dressed in all his pomp and grandeur to see Paul because these rulers knew Paul was someone special. The measure of the Holy Spirit was so strong upon Paul that even king Agrippa was so gripped by the message till he had to adjourn the meeting because he knew the implications that if he had believed Paul, he would have to give up his office (Acts 25, 26). But such is the strength and unction of the Spirit upon Paul. Not only the rulers were able to see that the ship captain and the centurion who took Paul to Rome. The centurion knew that Paul was special because whatever Paul said came to pass, so he gave Paul special treatment and he protected him and ensured that Paul was allowed some freedom during house arrest in Rome. The special miracles performed by Paul also testified to his uniqueness: he did not die after he suffered a snake bite in Malta, to everyone’s amazement; also the father of the island chief was healed by Paul. When pastor was preaching, he made us aware that there was the identity crisis concerning Christ and there was also the identity crisis concerning Paul who was specially anointed of God. Despite all the evidences, firstly in the Gospel Paul preached; secondly in the miracles he performed and thirdly in the*

measure of the Spirit of God upon him, yet there were many who were unable to recognize Paul. It is scary when pastor said Paul not only had to fight with the unbelieving Jews but also the believing, Orthodox Jews. That troubled me a lot and I couldn't sleep because of it. If the Jews had rejected Christ, they would reject the messengers of Christ. **But why is it the believing Jews including James and Peter found it difficult to recognize the special anointing of Paul? Such that when James addressed Barnabas and Paul, it was "beloved Barnabas and Paul". Consider the premium they gave to Barnabas! For a long time they could not recognize Paul. Why could not these ones recognize Paul? I don't know what answer pastor proffered but as I was thinking about it, I think one of the things pastor was trying to tell us is that the Jews are so institutional and so adamant in holding on to their ceremonial laws—that when Paul tried to tell them salvation is by Christ alone and justification is by faith, they found it very hard to accept and submit to his person.**" Response of Esther Ng (Singapore) to pastor's discourse on "Identity Of Those Anointed With The Holy Spirit" from the book of Acts, Part 1, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia; 22 December 2016 AD