

PREFACE

“Over breakfast this morning, Persis Chia mooted the idea that this message is kind of about the identity crisis, not concerning Yeshua Christ but Paul. I thought there could be something in that. At the beginning of the message yesterday, pastor introduced Paul to us, not as the 12th but the 13th apostle who had a special calling, being called directly by the glorified Christ. His conversion on the road to Damascus which we know from the Scriptures is significant because at least three times he preached and gave his conversion account as an example of his apostleship. And also of one who received the Gospel in a unique and distinct manner, having received it directly by revelation from Yeshua Christ. In Galatians, he gave his defence of this, showing that he was 17 years separated from the other apostles and that he simply did not have the opportunity nor time to receive the Gospel from man or by man. I felt as pastor developed the message, he showed many likenesses of Paul to his Lord, not only in the fierceness of the persecution that he suffered at the hands of the Jews. Pastor briefly touched on the account at Jerusalem that there was a fierce hatred of the Jews towards him just as there had been towards Christ. But I felt also, although pastor did not put it this way, we can almost say of Paul the same as we said of Christ - ‘he came unto his own, and his own received him not.’ (John 1:11) Because those closest to Paul, who should have recognised him, in subtle ways, failed or were very tardy and slow to really recognise him. I felt in this message, pastor brought out not just the recognition of his person or the recognition of the amount of the Holy Spirit on him, but particularly the recognition and appreciation of this doctrine of Justification by Faith. Pastor has spoken many times about the fallout between Barnabas and Paul and Barnabas’ failure to recognise the measure of anointing on Paul. But pastor said yesterday that Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus but he did not appreciate nor recognise Paul’s preaching of Justification by Faith. Pastor showed that there is evidence from the Scriptures that James, in a sense, denigrated Paul. He seemed to have a great deal of affection for beloved Barnabas and Paul. Peter himself was slow to give appropriate value to Paul and his preaching. When I was thinking about this last night, clearly, the greatest waste was leaving him for 17 years, that they did not recognise at the beginning when Paul first preached and the impact he had on people. And although pastor did not put it this way, but by the time Paul came back from Tarsus, if we add up the total time of his missionary journeys, he may have had quite a short ministry. By that time, things were running very quickly towards AD 70, towards the later epistles. I do thank God that towards the end of Peter’s ministry, he attributes the weight, value and inspiration of the Scripture to Paul’s writings. I remember that pastor said that if the apostles had recognised the value of the doctrine of Justification by Faith as preached by Paul, then the Gospel work would have gone further. I found that a challenging statement. Should they have joined Paul’s entourage? I mean, I think the most obvious thing is that 17 years were wasted, in a sense. I’m sure they were not wasted in the wisdom of God but in those 17 years, perhaps the Gospel could have been going out and out and out. I thought the evidence is definitely there of this variable but lacking appreciation of Paul’s exposition of the doctrines. I thought about it; we do not know what these other apostles did; it is not fair to speculate that they did a lot of rubbish things and we cannot speculate that they did great things but we can look at their epistles. I was thinking about James’ epistle and even though I appreciate it very much and am very much edified by it, I find it very incompatible with Paul’s writings. If you want to preach from James, you have to redefine everything. You have to redefine justification; you have to redefine faith; you have to redefine works. It’s very hard work. You can preach from it and it’s edifying and we don’t know what he preached, but nevertheless, his epistle is Scripture. When I look at Peter, I find that it’s less incompatible. You see that Peter had more inkling, more understanding of Paul but not as much as perhaps he should have had. I appreciated the way pastor did go in quite some depth about why it may have been difficult for the Jews to understand Paul’s exposition of Justification by Faith; pastor brought out for us these two different, difficult aspects being Imputation and Federal Headship. I think they are absent from the other epistles but I think they are doctrines not even touched on in a particularly vague way. I thought about it - the preaching at Pentecost. Given that the apostles were raised up in a time of great revival; they preached about the Person of Christ, about their sins; they preached to people about the hope of resurrection and many people were affected.”

Response of Sarah Harper (Oaktree Cottage, Kent, England) 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