

Title: **REHEARSING WHAT GOD HAS DONE**
Text: Acts 14:21-27
Subject: *Meetings in Ireland and England*
Date: Sunday Evening — April 29, 2007
Tape # Z-24b

Introduction:

In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church at Antioch to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. After preaching the gospel at Antioch, Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas came to Iconium and preached Christ there. They went on to preach the gospel in Lycaonia and Lystra. Then, they went to Derbe, back to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch, Pisidia again, preaching the gospel of Christ, confirming the brethren, and ordaining elders in every church. After that they passed through Pisidia and preached the Word in Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia (vv. 27-28; Acts 13:1-3). Then they returned to Antioch in Syria to give a report of all that had taken place on their first missionary journey. “When they had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:21-27).

Following their example, I want to share with you the things God has done in the past two weeks in the places in Ireland and England to which you have sent your pastor.

The Apostle Paul asked the saints at Colosse to pray for him, “*that God would open to us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ*” (Colossians 4:3), just as I asked you to pray for me, as Shelby and I left for Ireland and England two weeks ago. And I am happy to report to you, as he did, “*a great door and effectual was opened to me*” (1 Corinthians 16:9).

Sunday — April 15th

At 2:00 PM we left home and headed to the airport. By 6:00 PM we were in the air and on our way to England.

Monday — April 16th

Our plane safely landed at Gatwick Airport in London at 9:00 AM Monday morning. Janine (Clark) Hess met us at Gatwick Airport to pick up two of our bags. That was a great help, preventing us from having to lug the extra luggage from place to place.

We waited at the airport until 1:15 PM for a flight to Northern Ireland. We arrived in Belfast at 3:00 PM and were greeted at the airport by Russell Smyth and Nigel Norman who took us to Russell's home in Ballymoney, about an hour away. There we were warmly greeted by Russell's wife, Sharon, their son, Johnny, and Nigel's wife, Elizabeth. After a delightful dinner and time of fellowship with the Smyths and Russells, we finally got to bed around 10:30 PM. Having been up since 7:00 AM the day before, the bed was a welcome sight.

Tuesday — April 17th

Sharon out did herself fixing us an outstanding Ulster fry breakfast consisting of sausage, bacon, eggs, mushrooms, grilled tomatoes, fried soda bread, and fried potato bread. Yes, everything was fried, but there were no complaints from anyone! After breakfast the Smyths and Normans took us to see the sights in and around Ballymoney: an old Roman castle, called Don Luce Castle, and Giants Causeway. We would no doubt have spent more time at each of these attractions if the weather had not been so rainy and cold, but we enjoyed the time we did have and especially enjoyed the fellowship with our new friends in Christ.

Bro. Russell Smyth, who has received our tapes for many years, had reserved a very nice room at the Town Hall in Ballymoney for the meeting on Tuesday evening. The service was well attended with 35 to 45 people present. It was a great encouragement to Bro. Russell and the others who had planned and organized the meeting. The Lord graciously enabled me to preach the gospel from Zechariah 10:1—12. The Word was well received with many people commenting how thankful they were to hear the true gospel preached with such boldness and clarity.

One couple that we were especially thankful to have the privilege of meeting while we were in Ballymoney was Stewart and Harriet Boyd. We had heard from Bro. Boyd on a number of occasions in recent years and have always been greatly blessed by his correspondence. He has an extremely serious heart condition that keeps him confined at home most of the time. He so wanted to be able to attend the meeting on Tuesday evening, but did not know if he would be strong enough to do so. When the time came, God gave him the strength to be with us in the service, and our hearts were blessed tremendously as we listened to him tell of the Lord's gracious

dealings with him. Bro. Russell Smyth had given him one of our tapes many years ago, and God was pleased to reveal the gospel to him through message he heard. He said to Shelby, “God used that message to change my life and I have never been the same since.” With tears, we said good by to this dear man, knowing that it would, in all probability, be the one and only time we would have the joy of seeing him here.

Wednesday — April 18th

We were up and at it at 4:00 AM on Wednesday to get ready and get to the airport to catch our plane from Belfast, Ireland to Newcastle, England. Pastor Peter Meney and (to our great surprise) Dr. George Ella picked us up at the airport and we started on our 3½ hour drive to Peter’s home in Eggleston. We had a very pleasant drive to Eggleston, with beautiful, wide open countryside stretching for miles and miles. There were very few houses and an abundance of sheep and little lambs everywhere.

It was a special treat for us to meet Dr. George Ella, who against his doctors orders, had flown to Eggleston to surprise us and be with us for the meeting. Bro. Ella and I have been friends for many years, though we had never met face to face. We have tried to meet numerous times; but the Lord had prevented it until that morning. He was able to get a flight at the last minute from Mulheim, Germany, and did so without letting us know. It was a delightful and blessed surprise.

Dr. Ella is a very good historian and biographer. He has authored many books and writes regularly for *New Focus* magazine. He has more degrees than a thermometer and speaks several languages fluently. He is like a walking encyclopedia about any subject you mention, but we found him to be one of the most down to earth, gentle, warm, caring people we’ve ever met. Shelby and I considered it a rare privilege and honor to have been with Dr. Ella the two brief days we were in his company.

Wednesday evening’s service was at the *Eggesburn Baptist Church* in Eggleston. The church building was built in 1872 and the congregation meets in the original building. We understand the congregation there is usually quite small, but on this particular evening the little building was filled to capacity, with many people coming from great distances to attend the meeting. My text for the evening was the first three chapters of Hosea.

Again, God gave me liberty in preaching to gospel from the story of Hosea and Gomer, that great picture of our Savior's love for his church.

It was a great blessing to meet Pastor Meney and his family. Bro. Meney is the editor of *New Focus Magazine*, operates *GO Publications*, and pastors the Eggleston church. He has been a cherished friend for many years. It was a great delight to meet him, his wife Gill, his family and the saints there. Peter's parents drove down from Scotland for the meeting. The Meney's daughter and son-in-law (Fiona and David) also joined us. Needless to say, the house was full; but our hearts were bursting with joy and gratitude to our God as we drove away the next morning, warmed with the tender love displayed toward us by all.

Thursday — April 19th

After a quick breakfast of toast and cereal, we set out on our trip to Wolverhampton about 3½ hours away. Pastor Meney drove us in his car, accompanied by Dr. Ella. Again, the countryside was beautiful and much like that we had seen the day before. We stopped about an hour before getting to Wolverhampton for a cup of coffee and a sandwich at *Dobbie Garden Center*. There we saw a gorgeous array of flowers and plants. Shelby was tempted to buy something, but had to remind herself that we were flying and plants would not pack well in her suitcase. We were surprised to find a nice little restaurant in a garden center. Unlike such stores in the U.S.A., we learned that in England about all the stores of this kind have restaurants in them.

In Wolverhampton we were welcomed into the lovely home of *Jim and Eileene Gough*, who treated us graciously and royally during our stay with them, even giving up their master suite to us. Eileene had prepared a scrumptious meal for us Wednesday evening. *Sydney and Joan Buggins* joined us for dinner at the Goughs. Eileene, like the other ladies we met on our trip, had been quite concerned and nervous about having this strange preacher and his wife from America in her home for the first time. However, like the other ladies who were our hostesses, she soon realized that we are just as human as anyone else and before long we were laughing and talking with one another, just as if we were old friends. Our time with Jim and Eileen and Syd and Joan turned out to be simply delightful and we believe the friendship we developed with them is only the beginning of a long and lasting one.

Sydney Buggins had given Jim a video of our services and told him, “You should watch this.” Jim laid it aside, planning to get around to watching it, someday, but was never quite able to do so. Then, on Christmas day, Jim was rushed to the hospital with chest pains, which resulted in his having to have triple bypass surgery. While he was recuperating from surgery, he decided to play the video Sydney had given him. He was greatly blessed through the preaching of the Word and obtained more of our messages. During the month following his surgery, each Sunday, as Eileene left for the worship services at *West Park Baptist Church*, Jim would say, “I am going to church at Danville,” and watch one of the messages preached here.

In our travels, there were many people who told us that they regularly read our church bulletin and have acquainted themselves with what is going on at Grace Baptist Church. Jim was no exception. During one of our conversations, he asked Shelby, “How is Bobbie Estes getting along?” He said, “I read about the death of his wife, Judy, and the wonderful tribute Don wrote regarding her. I have thought and prayed for Bobbie often during the past year.” It is such a blessing to us know God’s people all over the world, though we have never met them, are concerned about our assembly and the work God has trusted to our hands, and that they are praying for us.

Services at the *West Park Baptist Church* in Wolverhampton went well on Thursday evening. There were probably well over 100 people in attendance. My text for the evening was 1 Peter 1:2 on the subject, “*Chosen, Sanctified, Redeemed, and Blessed.*” Several people commented they had not heard that kind of preaching in a long time.

It was a great delight to meet *Pastor Norman Wheeler* and family that night. Bro. Wheeler and I have corresponded and chatted by telephone several times in the past year. He traveled some distance to be in the service at Wolverhampton that night, bring his wife, children and a grandchild with him.

Friday — April 20th – 22nd

Jim and Eileene had a trip to Bedford planned for us before taking us on to Welwyn for the conference. Syd and Joan, followed us in their car. They were all so concerned about everything being just right for our trip to Bedford that the Goughs and the Buggins had done a test run to the museum

a few weeks earlier. It was a blessing to go through the *John Bunyan* museum again and learn more about the life of this man who wrote “*Pilgrims Progress*” during the twelve years he was imprisoned in Bedford jail preaching the gospel.

We arrived in Welwyn about 4:00 PM. Both the Goughs and Buggins planned their weekend to attend the conference at Welwyn with us. It was good to see our dear friend, *Evelyn Clark*, again, who made us feel very welcome in her home. Though we had very little time to actually visit with her, we were thankful for what time we had. She is a dear and faithful lady. She still greatly misses her beloved husband, God’s faithful servant, *Bro. Bill Clark*, whom she spoke of often with great fondness.

The conference at *Campus Church* in Welwyn Garden City began on Friday night. This was the only evening during our trip when I was not scheduled to preach. *Pastor Bob Dickie* from Flint, Michigan brought the message that evening. I was scheduled to preach for the next four sessions of the conference on the theme “*Christ in the Psalms and The Song of Solomon.*”

Saturday morning *Pastor Stephen Bignall*, his wife, *Fiona*, and their daughter, *Jessica*, took us to St. Albans to the Roman museum. All of the items on display had been uncovered from the grounds there in St. Albans. They had discovered numerous items, from dishes and cooking utensils to caskets with skeletons in them, to jewelry, and tiny instruments such as tweezers and ear scoops, which today we call Q-tips. These all help to tell the history of the Roman way of life. We thoroughly enjoyed the tour and found it fascinating to learn how advanced these people were almost two thousand years ago. After our trip to the museum, we joined *Allen and Christine Jellette* and their son, *Peter*, and his wife, *Joan*, and their baby for lunch.

Services at *Campus Church* began at 3:00 PM on Saturday afternoon. I preached from Luke 24:44-45. The title of the message was, “*Christ in the Psalms.*” The ladies served a meal and afterwards we went into the evening session of the conference. Saturday evening my text was taken from Psalm 130:4 on the subject, “*There is forgiveness with Thee.*” Sunday morning I preached from Song of Solomon 5:2-8 on “*Failing Saints and Our Unfailing God.*” The final message Sunday evening was taken from Song of Solomon 6:11-13 on “*Why Am I Thus?*” The services were excellent. The messages appear to have been greatly blessed of God to many who attended

the conference and a great encouragement to Pastor Bignall, the elders and the congregation.

Malwyn and Mary Rowe were one of the couples that attended the conference from quite a distance away. They related to Shelby that they have no gospel church in the area where they live where they can hear the gospel, so they stay home and watch our DVD's. They receive our bulletin each week by email and read every word of it. Each week they look to see whose names are mentioned and try to imagine they are meeting with us in our services. They said they may say, "It is Celeste Peterson's turn to keep the nursery today," or, "It is Don and Shelby's turn to clean the church this month," or, "We will have our fellowship dinner together today after the morning service and there will be no service this evening."

Shelby said to me, "I was reminded what a rare privilege it is to have a place to worship where the gospel is proclaimed every time we meet together, and how precious it is to have a church family. I pray God will keep me from ever taking these things for granted."

Monday — April 23rd – 24th

Bro. Stephen Bignall graciously drove us to Honiton on Monday. We left Evelyn's about 11:30 and arrived in Honiton around 4:00 PM. *Bro. Ian Potts* and his wife, *Rachel*, were waiting for us. They are a lovely young couple in their mid thirties with a 2 little boys, ages 2 and 3½. Rachel had a miscarriage just 10 days earlier, but would not tell us because she was afraid we would not stay with them. They were very hospitable and we felt completely at home in their home.

Ian rented meeting a room at the Honiton Hotel to host the meetings. On Monday night I brought a message entitled, "*As He is, so are we in this world,*" from 1 John 4:17. Tuesday evening I concluded the meetings in Honiton with a message from Mark 7:37, on the subject, "*He hath done all things well.*" Many, many people commented on what a blessing and encouragement the messages were to them. There was a great turnout for the services on both Monday and Tuesday nights, with attendance being around 75 or 80 each evening. People came from miles around to hear the gospel, some traveling for hours to get there.

It was a welcome sight to get to the service Monday evening and see the familiar faces of our new found friends in Christ, the Goughs and the Buggins. They seemed so hungry to hear the Word. They said they just could not get enough of it, so instead of going home from the Welwyn conference they decided to come to Honiton for the meetings there also. If they had not already had prior commitments on Thursday and Friday, I believe they would have gone on to the meetings in London as well.

On Tuesday morning I preached at the local pastors' fraternal. There were about 20 pastors present. The Lord enabled me preached to them the one and only message that is to be preached, that being, "*Christ is All*," from 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. This meeting had been arranged by *Pastor Frederick Sergeant*, another friend with whom I have corresponded frequently over the years, but had never met. Bro. Sarjeant and his wife, *Mary*, are simply delightful. He is the youngest 80 year old pastor I've ever known, full of energy and bursting with joy in the goodness of our God.

Wednesday — April 25th

Wednesday morning we had to say good-bye to Rachel and Ian Potts and their little boys and leave for London. They took us to the station, put us on the train, and off we went on our first train ride. It was great! What a comfortable way to travel. We sat back, relaxed, and had an enjoyable time discussing the events of the past week over a cup of coffee, as we rode through parts of England we had not seen before.

Three hours later we arrived in London, where we were greeted by *Pastor John and Anne Graham*. Shelby and I found ourselves immediately loving this delightful, happy couple. From the train station we went by taxi to Bunhill Fields. There we visited the graves of many great preachers of the past whose bodies sleep there awaiting the resurrection. I took picture of Shelby at the tomb of John Bunyan, and had her take one of me at the tomb of John Gill.

Gill is, by far, my favorite theologian and commentator. I have read something from his pen almost everyday for nearly forty years. I was disappointed, but not surprised, to find his tomb in terrible condition. I hope the city of London will allow me to have a plague (grave marker) place at the tomb, so that it can be easily identified by future visitors.

We took a double decker bus back to the train station. We chose to set on the top deck so we could get a good view of London. We were glad we got to see London, but were thankful we do not live there. It is definitely a different world. We quickly decided we would choose the laid back, sleepy little town of Danville, with its 15,000 population, to London and its 8 million population any day.

I preached Wednesday night at the *Westminster Baptist Church* in London from Psalm 68:18-20 on “*Salvation as God describes it.*” It was good to see Geoff Thomas, his wife Valerie, and their daughter, Rachel in the services again. Geoff and Valerie had been at both services in Honiton and had traveled for an hour and 40 minutes each way to get there. The trip to London took them several hours. They had both taken a week’s vacation off from work so they could attend the services.

Another dear widow lady, whose husband had pastored for over 50 years, had traveled a long distance by train to get to the services. She told Shelby that she just could not miss it if there was anyway possible to get there. She said her late husband had loved and preached the same things she had heard that night and that he had suffered much as a result of it.

After the service Wednesday night, *Bro. Hugh Pollington* took us to his home, where we were to spend Wednesday and Thursday night with he and his wife, *Wendy*.

Thursday — April 26th

Thursday was spent doing some shopping and seeing a few more of the sights in London, including Hampton Court, which is the palace of King Henry VIII. We only had time to see it from the outside, but if we ever go back we hope to get to take a tour of it.

Thursday evening I brought the final message in the series of meetings in England, preaching at *Ridley Hall Baptist Church* in downtown London, where *Bro. Peter Andrews* is pastor. My subject was, “*He was Made,*” from Hebrews 7:20. The attendance was probably a little less at this meeting than at the others, but there were those in attendance who seemed to truly appreciate and profit from the Word.

Friday — April 27th

We were up at 5:00 AM to prepare to leave for the airport to return HOME. We greatly appreciate Bro. Stephen Bignall coming from Welwyn to take us to the airport. We got home at midnight Friday night, after being up over 24 hours. We walked through the door, set our bags down, and went to BED with thankful hearts for journeying mercies every step of the way, for God's goodness in keeping us well and strengthening us for the daily demands, for our many new found friends in Christ, and most of all for his blessings on the Word to the many, many people who heard it over the past twelve days.

Thank you, our dear friends, for your prayers on our behalf. Thank You, our blessed God, for hearing and answering the prayers of your people.

Amen