

## Acts 14 - John Karmelich

1. Chapter 14 should be titled "The Empire Strikes Back".
  - a) For most of us who have seen the original Star Wars Trilogy, the 2nd installment focused on "The Evil Empire" and their attacks on the main characters
    - a) We will see parallel's in Chapter 14. The chapter focuses on the attacks of Satan's and the disciples' *reaction* to those attacks.
  - b) Witnessing for Jesus Christ, be-it a large group, or one on one, always draws fire from the enemy. Expect it.
    - i) "If you don't think the devil is real, try opposing him for awhile"  
Chuck Missler.
  - c) Chapter 14 gives a number of examples of how spiritual attacks happen, and more importantly, how to react to them and win.
    - i) When you read this chapter, notice the patterns of the attacks. Missionaries for the past 2,000 can tell you that Satan's methods haven't changed that much.
    - ii) The 2nd thing to notice is how Paul and Barnabas *react* to these attacks. Every reaction is a positive lesson for us on dealing with spiritual attacks.
  - d) This chapter is a good read when you are feeling oppressed by your circumstances.
    - i) Paul and Barnabas are an inspiration to us. You can see their boldness, their determination in the face of danger, and their focus no matter what the obstacle. It makes our trials and problems look very meager in comparison.
  - e) In Chapter 14, we have Paul and Barnabas continuing their 1st missionary journey.
    - i) It focuses on 3 cities in the area of Galatia (part of modern Turkey)
    - ii) Each of the 3 cities had a positive reaction to the Gospel, and various attacks by the enemies.
2. Chapter 14 focuses on the territory of Galatia. When you read the letter to the Galatians, you are reading the letter written to the disciples who were converted during this particular missionary journey.
  - a) One of the things we'll read about in Chapter 14 is the fact that Paul and Barnabas leave this territory without any mature Christians to oversee them. They appoint "elders", but these guys aren't any mature in faith than the young believers.
    - i) We will read how Paul & Barnabas had to leave each town, after a relatively short visit, mostly due to persecution.
    - ii) The fact that these are new Christians meant that they were vulnerable to false doctrines.
    - iii) That is one of the lessons of Paul's letter to the Galatians, written soon after this missionary journey. The Galatians were being lead by false-teachers who were trying to "add" to the free gift of Jesus by teaching them they had to "do things" to get into better standing for their salvation.
      - a) The book of Galatians was one of the prime inspirations of the Reformation movement. The Catholic Church at that time emphasized that you must "work hard" in order to achieve salvation.
3. Chapter 14 also wraps up the first missionary journey. Remember that this journey is only two chapters long, and started with a prayer meeting in Acts 13:1.
  - a) It is the first time any missionary group was specifically sent by the Holy Spirit to Gentiles as well as Jews.
  - b) Luke, the author, will then take a break from discussing missionary journeys in Chapter 15 to discuss some reconciliation issues between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

- c) The thing to see in Chapters 13 and 14 is how the Holy Spirit works through missionaries like Paul and Barnabas. There are lessons on:
    - i) Following the lead of the Holy Spirit.
    - ii) Dealing with various types of spiritual attacks.
    - iii) How to witness to different types of groups.
    - iv) The importance of "follow up" to help believers grow and mature.
    - v) Finally, there are good lessons on leadership, no matter what the situation.
      - a) Notice the determination & boldness of Paul in the face of persecution.
  - d) With that, let's get back to Paul & Barnabas in the middle of Galatia.
4. Chapter 14, Verse 1: At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.
- a) You'll notice the pattern by now in that whenever Paul and Barnabas come to a new town, the first place they go is the Synagogue. Why?
    - i) Remember that Paul & Barnabas were Jews themselves.
    - ii) The Jews are familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures.
    - iii) Paul and Barnabas are preaching about the same God, only with the correct way to approach salvation, which is through Jesus, not by keeping the law.
  - b) Paul's speech is not recorded here. The fact that the author Luke omits it probably means it was similar to the speeches already given. All that Luke records is that many Jews and Gentiles believed. "Gentiles" here, refer to those of non-Jewish decent coming to a synagogue service.
    - i) God is always ecstatic when people first believe the Gospel message.
    - ii) That detail is important enough to mention every time it happens in the Bible.
    - iii) Jesus said: "I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10, NIV)
  - c) An interesting bit of Bible trivia is that the author Luke never numbers the Gentile believers. You'll never read of "ten Gentiles got saved here or two hundred there".
    - i) I believe the reason for the lack of numbering is because of Romans 11:25. That verse says that the rapture (or Second Coming, depending on your viewpoint) occurs when the "full number" of Gentile believers has been accounted for. Nobody knows that exact number except God the Father (Mark 13:32). Therefore, that number is kept secret and no clues are given.
5. The attack of the enemy, situation #1, Verse 2: But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.
- a) The Greek word for "refused to believe" implies they were beyond help. The attitude that they refused to even listen in the first place. A good synonym is "impenetrable".
  - b) So what do these enemies do to stop Paul & Barnabas? Spread rumors!
    - i) There are few things in life more dangerous than false rumors.
      - a) The term "poisoned their minds" is a good description of the danger of false rumors.
    - ii) Most adults have seen a life destroyed by false innuendoes. I remember hearing Chuck Smith teach of false rumors spread about his ministry when it was first growing. Chuck's attitude was to ignore the rumors and focus on what God called him to do. Let God deal with the rumormongers. That's a good attitude for all of us to learn.
      - a) "But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:8 NIV)

6. Paul's response to the rumors, Verse 3: So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.
- a) Did Paul run away? Did he say, you know, these rumors are getting ugly, let's make a run for it? No! I don't think he even spent time defending himself. He stuck to the Gospel, "the message of his grace", as it is called in Verse 3. God took care of the rest.
    - i) Again, focus on your mission. Let God deal with your enemies!
      - a) The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the LORD. (Proverbs 21:31 NKJV)
  - b) We have a mention of here of "signs and wonders" as *evidence* of their credibility.
  - c) God will do that, especially in frontier areas of missionary works. God is well aware that rumors will start against any missionary preaching a new God. The signs and miracles were for support of God's work.
7. Verse 4: The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.
- a) There is a false notion that if you preach Jesus, it will bring peace and harmony to all who hear the message. Jesus himself taught otherwise:
    - i) Jesus said, "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. (Luke 12:51-52 NIV)
    - ii) We have to expect that. Being a Christian is going to cause division, often in our own family.
    - iii) It comes down to the fact you can't be neutral about Christianity. It is exclusive. It is offensive to other religions. Either you believe the Bible is the Word of God or you don't. That is why Christians often encourage people to read the Bible for themselves. The Bible is designed with an incredible amount of built-in evidence as support that it is the truth.
8. Verse 5: There was a plot afoot among the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. <sup>6</sup> But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, <sup>7</sup> where they continued to preach the good news.
- a) Notice the progression of the attack of the enemy. First they tried spreading rumors about Paul & Barnabas. Our two hero's were unaffected by this, ignored the accusations and stuck to their jobs. Since that didn't work, the enemies resort to violence.
  - b) Notice is the practical side of Paul & Barnabas. They heard there was a plot to kill them, via stoning.
    - i) Did they pray to God to stop the plot while they kept witnessing?
      - a) No! They ran for it!
    - ii) It doesn't mean they were cowards, but there are times when practical situations call for this.
      - a) Jesus himself ran through the crowds when some Pharisee's tried to kill him. Not that he couldn't have called angels to stop their attack. Jesus knew what his mission was and the timing of his death. Jesus was showing that there are times to take logical, precautionary measures for our own safety.
    - iii) This wasn't the first time, nor the last time in the Book of Acts that Paul made a run for his life.

- iv) The interesting thing is that latter in this chapter, we are going to read of Paul returning to the same city where they threatened to kill them!
  - a) Isn't that a contradiction? Possibly, but I see it as a sense of timing. This group of enemies was organized and ready to stone them. Paul's heart to help these new converts was greater than that threat, and he went back a long time later when they weren't so organized. He could also re-enter in a more stealth operation.
  - b) I don't believe running for your lives is a contradiction to "trusting God". Sometimes, when we don't know God's exact plans for our lives, we simply have to trust him and do the "logical thing". Thus Paul and Barnabas fled for their lives.
- c) Notice also that the threat of death was not enough to deter them from their missionary journey. They did not say, "Well, we were almost killed, maybe its God's will we stop this missionary journey and return home!" No, they just went on to the next town, and stuck to their game plan.
  - i) That's a powerful lesson for all of us in determination and focus.
- 9. Verse 8: In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed <sup>10</sup> and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.
  - a) If you're getting a strange sense of déjà vu, don't worry, this story is very similar to what Peter & John did in Chapter 3 of the Book of Acts, Verses 1-9.
    - i) In that story, Peter & John walked up to the Temple, saw a lame beggar, and told him "in the name of Jesus, walk".
  - b) A key part of this verse is in Verse 9: Paul noticed, "He had the faith to be healed".
    - i) This is the Spiritual Gift of "discernment". It is one gift that one could have if you are born-again. It is a super-natural ability to notice something that others would not notice.
      - a) We know that this guy *had* that faith, because he jumped up and started walking! (The Greek text implies "leaping" as well.)
  - c) Most commentators speculate that there was no synagogue in Lystra.
    - i) There is no mention of Paul & Barnabas entering any synagogue.
    - ii) There is no mention of any great sermon being preached here.
  - d) Notice the lack of any people converting to Christianity by this great miracle!
    - i) That's an important lesson for us as Christians: Miracles don't automatically make people believe the truth.
      - a) Too often people pray, "Oh Lord, if you just show my friend here a great miracle, they will believe". Well guess what, that miracle often happens, but they still refuse to change their lifestyle. Why? It's because people aren't willing to change their ways, even when confronted with amazing evidence to the contrary.
        - (1) Jesus himself commented on this: "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31 NIV)

10. Verse 11, the reaction to the miracle: When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!"<sup>12</sup> Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.<sup>13</sup> The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.
- a) Some translations have the Roman names (Jupiter and Mercury) as opposed to the Greek names, (Zeus and Hermes).
    - i) Zeus is the #1 Greek god. His Roman name was Jupiter.
    - ii) Hermes is a son of Zeus. His Roman name was Mercury.
    - iii) Hermes was Zeus' spokesman, so that is why they called Paul "Hermes". Barnabas was probably taller in stature, and thus, he became "Zeus".
  - b) There is a traditional fable that comes out of Galatia. The Greek gods Zeus & Hermes came to this town "disguised" as men. Nobody showed them any hospitality except for one couple. That one couple had their little house turned into a marble mansion and the rest of the town was destroyed.
    - i) The sources on this story appear credible. It also makes sense to teach this story in order to encourage hospitality.
  - c) Personally, I find this Bible verse funny, but maybe it's just me. Here's a society that worship's the Greek gods. The traditional stories exist about them. Here comes 2 guys performing a miracle. First thing they think, "Well, they must be Greek gods! Quick, somebody get some bulls to sacrifice, and wreaths (probably of flowers) to honor them!"
  - d) There is a great danger to Paul and Barnabas at this point. They could have thought "you know Barbanas, they think we're gods. Boy, these guys are going to be easy to convert to Christianity. They'll believe anything we say."
    - i) This is a grave mistake to work this way. Suppose you make some obvious error a few weeks later, and you now lack credibility as "gods". What will happen to their witness?
    - ii) This type of danger and scenario has played out through history.
      - a) Many Bible teachers use the example of James Cook, when he first sailed to the Hawaiian Islands. They thought he was a god, and James Cook accepted that to win them over. When Captain Cook was discovered bleeding one day, the natives killed him because they realized he wasn't a god after all.
      - b) A modern example would be the "faith-healers". People will look to these people for the next miracle, or they will focus on their doctrines and not the truth of the Bible.
    - iii) This reminds me of a view I hold that sort-of relates to this text. I take the view that no Bible teacher is perfect in all their doctrines (yes, even me! ☺). I believe when I get to heaven I will have the correct debate-position on some issues and be wrong on other debate-positions. Notice I'm strictly talking about classical Christian debate issues like "free-will" vs. "pre-destiny", not salvation issues. The reason I believe nobody is 100% correct in all their views is that it keeps our focus on Jesus, and not on any individual teacher.
    - iv) Remember the focus of every Bible teacher and minister is Jesus, and not the person giving the message. That is the temptation Paul & Barnabas faced here.

11. The good news is Barnabas and Paul give the proper response. Verse 14: But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: <sup>15</sup> "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you.
- a) Back in Verse 14, the bulls and wreaths were brought to the city gates. The temple was located outside the city walls. Barnabas and Paul ran to this location when they heard what was happening.
  - b) There is something interesting to notice in Verse 14. Luke the author calls Paul and Barnabas apostles. This leads into a classical debate over just "who" is an apostle?
    - i) Most (I emphasize most) commentators classify apostles as not just the "12", but those who were original eyewitnesses to the risen Christ. We know Barnabas was around at the day of Pentecost, so he may have seen Jesus then. Paul saw Jesus when he was first converted and blinded. I take this view.
    - ii) Other commentators say Jesus appointed the 12 apostles, and those apostles appointed other apostles.
    - iii) This is one of those debate things that, theologically, are minor issues.
  - c) Barnabas and Paul tore their clothes in Verse 14. This is a "Jewish thing". It is a reaction to blasphemy. By the local citizens calling Barnabas and Paul "gods", in their minds, the local citizens were committing blasphemy. Tearing their clothes is a Jewish sign of remorse. It may have also have helped to show the local citizens that Paul & Barnabas were just ordinary men.
12. Now we come to Paul's first sermon directed to people who know nothing about the Bible. In all previous sermons, we get a true Jewish flavor, with strong emphasis on Old Testament Scripture. What you will notice in the next couple of verses is the lack of any Old Testament References. Verse 15: We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.
- a) How do you preach Jesus to people who don't even believe in one God?
    - i) You have to start with the fundamentals. Some people need to believe in God before they can even believe in Jesus. That is what Paul is doing here.
    - ii) So where do you begin? A good place to start is nature!
    - iii) Nature has all sorts of evidence for the existence of God.
  - b) Compare Paul's statement in Verse 15 of "the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them" to what with Paul said (paraphrased) in Romans:
    - i) "Since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made, and have known of his existence and great eternal power. So they will have no excuse (when they stand before God at Judgment Day). (Romans 1:20 TLB)
    - ii) In both cases, Paul refers to the Greek gods as "worthless things".
    - iii) In Greek/Roman mythology, each God was in charge of a different aspect. One for rain, one for health, one for pleasure, etc. This same mythology had its roots in Babylonian culture and carried on through Egyptian and other cultures. God designed us with an "instinct" to know this is wrong. There is no set of Gods "battling it out for control". Who created these Gods? There has to be a one true God in charge of all creation.
      - a) This leads to the natural question of "Who created God". Part of the answer is God's name ""JWTH", often pronounced "Jehovah" The name means "I am", or "I am that I am". This means he always existed, never past tense (not "I was") and always will be (not "I will be"). He knows all things and cannot learn. The only God worth worshipping is a God who is perfect. A perfect God cannot learn. If God is not perfect, then

God cannot be trusted, and therefore why pray to him? This is why the true God goes out of his way to prove these facts about him.

13. OK, off my soapbox and back to Paul: Verse 16: In the past, he let all nations go their own way.
- a) What does this mean? It means God allows free will.
  - b) A God of love must allow free will so we can freely choose him over other alternatives.
    - i) This is why God allows evil. If he is going to allow free will, then he has to allow evil as well.
    - ii) Let me give you an example. Suppose every time you wanted to tell a lie, an angel pops out of nowhere and covers your mouth. Every time you wanted to get angry at someone in traffic, an angel intervenes and stands in the way. At this point, most people would be complaining not how good God is, but how God won't allow them to do anything! Besides, if it were *that* obvious that God exists, people would not turn to God out of a free choice.
14. Verse 17: Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."
- a) Just because God let people go their own way, doesn't mean he did not leave evidence of his existence.
    - i) Again, Paul uses nature as his examples. He states how rain comes, and food grows out of the ground.
    - ii) This is a great argument against evolution. It always amazes me how all the information of the construction of a human being, an animal, or even a plant is encoded in the tiniest of "seeds". Even if you argue the world is 6 billion years old, it is not possible by random chance to create information that precise in seeds that small. Nature itself teaches against the lie of evolution.
  - b) Paul throws in one more argument "(God) fills your heart with joy".
    - i) A classical children's question is: "How can I believe in a God I can't see?"
    - ii) The answer is "Can you see love? Sadness? Joy? We know they exist, but they can't be seen. We can see *evidence* of these events, but true inner joy is something all people can understand.
  - c) This leads to another classical question "Why doesn't God punish the wicked?" We all know of horrible people who have great blessings in their life.
    - i) Part of the answer is free will, as we discussed earlier. God is also patient, as he wants to give everybody a chance to repent. (Study Romans 9:20-24.)
    - ii) Also remember is that this life is all the blessings they will ever have.
      - a) David understood this. "When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. (Psalm 73:16-17, NIV).
15. Verse 18: Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.
- a) Old habits die hard. I can just picture someone in the crowd yelling "OK, Paul, we believe you're not one of the gods. But can't we just sacrifice a few bulls on your behalf anyway, just to be on the safe side? ☺
  - b) That type of attitude has been common throughout history. A belief in multi-religions. The concept of praying to more than one God, since "all religions are basically good".
    - i) A modern example of this is the Unitarian Church. They accept Jesus as well as other "great thinkers" of history.
    - ii) The problem of course, is that Christianity is exclusive. Jesus says so himself. You can't compromise with the Gospel.
      - a) Jesus said for whoever is not against us is for us. "(Mark 9:40 NIV)

16. Verse 19: Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.
- a) The Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium were obsessed. This is a hundred mile journey to where Paul and Barnabas were.
    - i) Remember that Paul himself was once that obsessed, traveling from town to town to find Christians for the purpose of arresting them.
  - b) It's interesting to remember what Jesus predicted about Paul back in Chapter 9:
    - i) I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." (Acts 9:16 NIV)
  - c) Remember that just because you are a Christian, God does not guarantee He will miraculously preserve you through all situations. All things we *do* suffer through end up working for God's glory (Romans 8:28), but God only promises joy *through* suffering, not the prevention of suffering in the first place.
  - d) Remember that this same crowd was trying to claim Paul & Barnabas were "gods". Now they were trying to stone them. Notice it's not just the Jewish out-of-towner zealots stoning them. It is also the local crowds.
    - i) I believe the right word here is "fickle". That describes someone who is easily persuadable. Crowds can be that way.
  - e) This event of being stoned, and either unconscious or actually dead had a long-term affect upon Paul's life. It is mentioned in several of Paul's letters. Here are 2 examples:
    - i) Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. (Galatians 6:17 NIV)
    - ii) "Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea," (2nd Cor. 11:25 NIV)
17. Verse 20: But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.
- a) I have to admit, I wonder what was Barnabas and other the disciples doing when Paul was being stoned, and then, lying there, presumably dead. Were they also being stoned? Were they praying over Paul? Did they assume he was dead? The text doesn't say, so we can only speculate.
  - b) Whether Paul actually died and was resurrected or just unconscious is debated among scholars. One cannot tell from the text. I've read commentaries that argue either way.
  - c) Despite the stoning, Paul marched right back into town. This is a lesson in leadership. Paul wanted to prove, at the risk of his life, that the gospel message will not be hindered nor intimidated by physical violence. This was a symbolic gesture to march back in town, and make one last attempt to win converts, or to minister to those who did believe. You have to admire Paul here. It's a great inspirational lesson. Not leaving until the next day is a strong symbolic gesture of defiance.
18. Verse 21, on to the town of Derbe: They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,<sup>22</sup> strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.
- a) Paul and Barnabas "ended" their trip here. From this point they backtracked to the cities they have already visited before going home.
  - b) Why Paul & Barnabas decided to end here, it is not known. If you look at a map, it would seem logical for them to keep traveling on foot and eventually, Paul would hit his hometown of Antioch.
    - a) Remember that there is more than one "Antioch". To make it simple, the Antioch mentioned in this verse is in Galatia (part of Turkey today).
    - b) The "Antioch" where Paul was from is a large city, which is in the territory of modern Syria.

- ii) I think Paul and Barnabas made a decision here. I'm guessing the conversation went something like this "You know Paul, we could keep on going this way, and in a few weeks, be back in Antioch." Paul responds, "That's true, but I also have a heart to go encourage the people we have already led to Christ. I know its out of the way, but lets go back to the cities we visited"
    - a) Think about the danger of this. These guys were run out of town in several places. I suspect the second set of visits was going to be more "stealth" to visit the new converts.
  - iii) The lesson for us is the importance of encouragement. It is not just enough to win people for Christ, but we have to help strengthen them and grow in faith.
  - c) Not much is said about Paul and Barnabas's efforts to strengthen these new believers. It is interesting that one of the first things recorded is Paul saying ""We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,"
    - i) Notice the "we" in this verse, refers to all Christians, not just Paul & Barnabas.
    - ii) These Christians were the minorities in terms of religious beliefs. The temptation to return to their old lifestyle will be all around them. (Sound familiar? ☺)
    - iii) Remember my opening premise. This chapter is about "The Empire Strikes Back". We have seen Paul & Barnabas receive vicious rumors, receive the temptation to be treated as Gods, and finally, violently have their life threatened. What Paul is saying in this verse is oppression simply for being a Christian will happen to all who faithfully pursue Jesus Christ.
      - a) Why is that? Why do we have to suffer to enter the kingdom of God?
        - (1) Part of it is a test. God is always testing our faith. Not to harm us, but to help as grow, and mature us.
        - (2) Part of Satan's overall game plan is to prevent as many people as possible from becoming Christians. Remember I mentioned earlier that there is a fixed number of Gentiles who will become Christians prior to Jesus coming back? (Again, Romans 11:25). Satan is aware of that fixed number too, and is trying to slow down the growth as much as possible!
19. Verse 23: Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.
- a) So Paul & Barnabas backtracked to the 3 cities they have visited in the Galatia territory. They appointed church elders. Then they prayed and fasted for them.
  - b) The Greek word for "elder" is "presbuteros", where the word Presbyterian originates. It literally means senior. It's hard for us to imagine for a church to pick a leader who has only been a convert for a short period of time. I'm speculating that Paul picked seniors who had good maturity. One of the reasons for Paul/Barnabas' prayer and fasting is that they know that these people had limited knowledge of the Bible, Jesus and wouldn't have others to help them. In those situations, the Holy Spirit is needed more to help a young church grow.
20. Verse 24: After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia,<sup>25</sup> and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. <sup>26</sup> From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.
- a) Pisidia and Pamphylia are towns already mentioned in the last two chapters where Paul and Barnabas previously had been. This is just Luke finishing his discussion about revisiting the towns where they had already been.

- b) Looking at a Bible map, Attalia is a port town in Galatia, where Paul & Barnabas then set sail back to Antioch where they had started.
  - c) Thus ends the first of 3 missionary journeys recorded in the Book of Acts.
21. Verse 27: On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. <sup>28</sup> And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.
- a) A good word to underline in this verse is "God". "God had opened the door...to the Gentiles". They didn't brag about their accomplishment, but what God had done *through* them. That's one of the secrets of being a Christian. It is to let God work *through* you and not try to work ahead of Him.
  - b) Most commentators speculated that Paul was home in Antioch for about a year before the second missionary journey began.
22. On a different topic, we have now made it half way through Acts! So, stop, put down your notes, and go out for an ice cream. Paul and Barnabas took a break from their missionary journeys, and we should too! We'll talk again next week. In the meantime, enjoy the break, you deserve it for putting up with me so far! ☺
23. Let's pray: Father, we thank you for these lessons taught to us about these missionary journeys. The work *you* have laid, 2,000 years ago, still works as patterns for us to follow today, in what you have called us to do. Let the Holy Spirit guide us, in that unique mission you have for us, as we seek your guidance. For we ask it in Jesus name, Amen.