

Persevering  
IN THE Power  
OF THE Spirit

Acts 21—28



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VALERIE WILSON

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## **Dedication**

*To my sisters, Mary Jackson and Marti Cook. These dear “girls” have been my greatest and most loving supporters in all my endeavors. Though many miles have separated us through all our adult lives, we are as close as any sisters could be. “A three-fold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).*

## **Previous Books in This Series**

*Living in the Power of the Spirit* (Acts 1—12)—RBP5120

*Serving in the Power of the Spirit* (Acts 13—20)—RBP5126

PERSEVERING IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

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# Preface

**Persevere**—“to persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement.”

I was in high school when I took an elective course in world geography. Early in the fall semester Miss Gray gave an assignment that would later be a test: draw the map of the Roman Empire at its greatest extent. Despite being the granddaughter (with about four greats in front of that description) of James Wilson, the early American globe maker, I could see no possible way to draw a map from memory. I struggled with that assignment for days and finally announced to my father that I was going to drop out of the course. He looked at me and said, “That’s too bad; you’ll never know if you could have done it.”

That was all the incentive I needed to *persevere* in learning how to draw that map. The lesson of the high school map has prodded me more than once to keep going; to not give up.

In life and ministry, we all meet “counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement.” We are all faced with opportunities to quit. Something becomes too difficult; someone is against us; or the circumstances prove too daunting. What will keep us going when throwing in the towel, ditching the project, or just dropping out seems like a good idea?

Perhaps we can learn how to persevere from the apostle Paul. Listen to his words.

“I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19).

“Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Acts 27:25).

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

The final eight chapters of Acts are filled with enough “counter-influences, opposition, or discouragement” to cause any person to give up. But not Paul. As you study these chapters, watch him *Persevering in the Power of the Spirit*. Then continue on where God has placed you, knowing that the same Spirit of God works in you to accomplish His purposes.



# Resources for Your Study

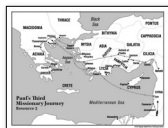
A number of extra resources will enhance your study of Acts 21–28. Go to [RBPstore.org/downloads](http://RBPstore.org/downloads) and locate the downloads for this study, *Persevering in the Power of the Spirit*. The folder contains seven documents. For individual study, you will need to print *ten* copies of resource 1, *one* copy of resources 2–6, and *thirteen* copies of resource 7.



**Resource 1:** The Acts Acrostic will help you focus your Bible reading and study. I suggest that you read the entire Scripture passage for each lesson at one sitting. As you read, look in the text for Actions of the Holy Spirit, Church Facts, Transitional Details, and Supernatural Events. Jot down your findings on the acrostic for that lesson. You will have fewer entries for this study than you had for the previous studies in this series. After you have read the entire Biblical text and filled in the acrostic, go back and read the separate sections of verses and answer the questions.



In each lesson you will find this designation, alerting you to specific things to record on your acrostic if you have not already done so.



**Resource 2:** You will use the map of Paul's third missionary journey in lesson 1.



**Resource 3:** This resource on the various Jewish groups in Acts will be a helpful reminder in lesson 4.



**Resource 4:** The chart of the Herods will help you remember who was related to whom in lesson 5.



**Resource 5:** Use the map of Paul's journey to Rome in lessons 8–10.



**Resource 6:** This timeline of Paul's life will be helpful as you review the great apostle's life and ministry.



**Resource 7:** Make thirteen copies of this resource so you can work through some key points in each of Paul's letters.

# God's Plan of Salvation

As you study the Scriptures—alone or with a group of women—you may realize that you have never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We use a number of different terms to designate this relationship:

- being born again (John 3:3, 7),
- accepting the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23),
- being saved (Acts 4:12),
- receiving Christ as Savior (John 1:12),
- becoming God's child (John 1:12).

These descriptive terms are synonymous. Sometimes it is easier to understand one concept more than another, but all of them are true of a person who “believeth in him”—that is, God's Son (John 3:16, 18, 36).

A person who wants to enter this personal relationship with Jesus Christ must acknowledge and believe five basic truths.

(1) *I am a sinner.* The Bible says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” and “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:23, 10). Until a person recognizes that she is a sinner in God's eyes, she will not be able to admit she needs a Savior.

(2) *God loves me.* The Bible says, “But God commendeth [showed] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus said that God loved the world of sinners so much that He sent His Son into this world (John 3:16, 17).

(3) *Jesus died for me.* The Bible says, “Who [Jesus] his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” and, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 2:24; 1:18, 19). Jesus loved *you* enough to die for *you*.

(4) *I receive Him.* The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death;

but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). It also says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). The basis of our salvation is what Jesus has done for us; not what we can do for Him.

(5) *I am God's child.* The Bible says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). When you receive Christ by faith, God makes you His child. He is now your Heavenly Father, and this is a forever relationship! The Bible says no one or no thing can ever take you out of God's hand (John 10:28, 29) and nothing at all can ever separate you from God's love (Romans 8:38, 39).

If you are ready to make this life-changing decision, you may want to express your desire to God in prayer. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). As soon as possible, tell someone else about your decision.

Welcome to God's family!

# Ready to Die

Acts 21:1–15

*“Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).*

Advice columns have been around for a long time. Once limited primarily to newspapers, advice columns are now popular on the Internet as well. Columns like “Dear Abby” and “Ask Ann Landers” have attempted to offer commonsense solutions to problems sent in by anonymous writers. But *giving advice* is probably as old as the human race itself. Paul was on the receiving end of advice in the passage of Scripture we will consider in this lesson.

As we begin this study of Acts 21–28, we will conclude Paul’s third and final missionary journey. We will watch events transpire that eventually made it possible for Paul to go to Rome. We will find out what happened in Rome and, from historical sources, determine what may have happened to Paul beyond the end of Acts. The final lesson is a brief overview of the letters Paul wrote. These chapters are filled with drama, hardship, and persecution. Paul never gave up. *Persevering in the Power of the Spirit*, Paul left us a great example of how to be faithful to the very end of our life’s journey.

Acts 20 concludes with an emotional scene. Paul met with the leaders of the Ephesian church in the town of Miletus. Paul was in a hurry; he wanted to get to Jerusalem in time to celebrate Passover. But he wanted one more opportunity to encourage his Ephesian friends. After Paul’s admonitions to them (vv. 18–35), he “prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him” (vv. 36, 37). Everyone in the group seemed to sense it was the last time they would

all be together this side of Heaven. The Ephesians accompanied Paul to the ship, and once again he was on his way. (If it has been some time since you read or studied the book of Acts, I suggest that you read chapters 1–20 before continuing this study.)

## Study the Scripture

### THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED

#### The Voyage to Tyre (Acts 21:1–6)

*Read Acts 21:1–6.*

1. What three places are named in verse 1?

You can locate Patara on resource 2, the map of Paul’s third journey. Paul was probably sailing on a small ship known as a coastal vessel that sailed relatively close to the mainland. Each place mentioned was about a day’s journey and provided a stopping place for the night. In Patara, Paul and his companions boarded a larger and sturdier ship for the 400-mile journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Tyre.

The church in Tyre had an interesting history. You will recall that Paul at one time had gone by the name *Saul* and was the chief persecutor of the church (Acts 9:1). Following the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7), the followers of Christ in Jerusalem “were scattered abroad” and “went every where preaching the word” (8:4). One of the places they went was Phenice (11:19). (Note that Phenice in 11:19 and Phenicia in 21:2 are the same place.)



*You may want to add the founding of the church in Tyre as a Church Fact on your Acts Acrostic (resource 1).*

As Paul concluded the third missionary journey, he visited a church that was started because of the persecution he once had instigated!

2. How long did Paul stay in Tyre?
3. What did the believers in Tyre tell Paul?

In the Greek language the verb *said* in verse 4 actually means the people “kept on saying.” They didn’t say this to Paul just one time; they said it over and over again.

The counsel from the disciples in Tyre seemed to directly contradict Paul’s own words.

4. Read Acts 20:22 and 23. What did Paul say he would do?

We have a dilemma. Acts 20:23 reads as if Paul had the Holy Spirit’s permission, as it were, to go to Jerusalem even though he would be persecuted. Acts 21:4 sounds like the same Holy Spirit was directing Paul’s friends to tell him not to go to Jerusalem. We know that God does not contradict Himself, so how are we to resolve the two passages?

We can interpret “through the Spirit” in 21:4 to mean that Paul’s friends knew “through the Spirit” that Paul would suffer in Jerusalem; therefore, they urged him not to go. So the warning about what would happen in Jerusalem was from God’s Spirit, but the urging not to go at all was human. It was the believers’ sincere desire that Paul not subject himself to further suffering.

God’s Word itself cautions us to test prophecies. (See 1 Corinthians 14:29–33 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21.) Many people are drawn into cults and false teaching because they fail to carefully discern what God, through His Spirit, has revealed to us in His Word.

Once again as Paul left a group of people who loved him dearly, they all met together (including the women and children) to pray and bid each other good-bye. We can assume this gathering was as tearful as the one in Miletus.

### **To Jerusalem via Caesarea (Acts 21:7–15)**

***Read Acts 21:7–15.***

The ship on which Paul was sailing made a one-day stop at Ptolemais (between Tyre and Caesarea). This allowed Paul an opportunity to encourage the believers in that town before continuing to Caesarea.

5. Where did Paul and his company stay after arriving in Caesarea?

6. What do you remember about their host? (If you need to jog your memory, read Acts 6:5 and 8:5, 6, 26, 40.)

Twenty to twenty-five years went by between Acts 8:40 and 21:8. It is probable that Philip started the church in Caesarea and then stayed on as the pastor for all those years.

A prophet named Agabus paid a visit to Paul while he was in Philip's home.

7. What did Agabus prophesy concerning Paul?
8. How did Agabus illustrate his prophecy?
9. This is not the first time in Acts we read a prophecy from Agabus. Read Acts 11:28. What did he prophesy and how accurate was he?



*The presence of a prophet in the church is a Transitional Detail to add to your acrostic.*

10. How did Paul's companions and the others in Philip's house respond to Agabus's prophecy?

Once again Paul experienced the tension between what he clearly knew to be God's will for him and what his friends thought he should do. Paul regarded Agabus's prophecy "not as a prohibition but a divine forewarning so that he would be spiritually prepared for what would happen."<sup>1</sup>

Notice the *we* in verse 12. Dr. Luke, the writer of Acts, included him-



self in the group who strongly urged Paul to change his plans. But Paul would not be deterred.

11. What was Paul willing to do for the sake of Jesus Christ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. Paul made a number of bold declarations, beginning with the words *I am*. Read each of the following passages and write Paul's "I am" statement.
  - (a) Acts 21:13
  
  - (b) Romans 1:14
  
  - (c) Romans 1:15
  
  - (d) Romans 1:16
  
  - (e) Romans 8:38, 39
  
  - (f) 1 Corinthians 15:9
  
  - (g) Galatians 2:20
  
  - (h) 1 Timothy 1:15
  
  - (i) 2 Timothy 4:6

Paul withstood the pressure of his friends, and he *persevered through the power of the Spirit* to do the will of God.

Paul and his companions traveled the sixty-two miles to Jerusalem. They arrived most likely in the spring of AD 57. The third missionary journey was over.

### **Apply the Scripture**

- We must be careful not to let other people's interpretation of circumstances cause us to question what we believe to be God's will

for us. Because our friends love us, they do not want to see us experience hard times. What examples of this principle can you name?

- Paul's experience in Tyre and then in Caesarea provides some principles regarding giving and taking advice.

(1) Advice can be too quick. We need to learn to slow down, whether giving or taking advice. Snap judgments may be wrong. Take time; don't speak or act too quickly.

(2) Advice can be wrong. Our friends may have our best interests at heart, but their ideas may be wrong for us.

(3) Advice can be based on personal issues. Sometimes we reason, "You shouldn't do this because of the effect it will have on me." A mother may say to a child, "If you go to that faraway mission field, who will take care of your father and me?"

(4) Advice may not take into account the revealed will of God. Sometimes we want friends to encourage us on the path we've already decided to take even though that path may be apart from God's will. For example, a young woman may be in love with an unbeliever. He is everything she always wanted in a mate. When she asks her friends for advice, they comment on his love for her, his good job, his kindness, and on and on. No one holds up the STOP sign and says, "Wait a minute; this is wrong. This relationship violates God's Word."

Think carefully about the advice you give and receive. Remember that doing the will of God often defies human logic and upsets our comfort zones. Like Paul, we need to be determined to do the will of God in our own lives and to encourage others to do God's will as well.

### **Note**

1. Homer A. Kent, *Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1972), 159.