

Introducing the "Prison Epistles"

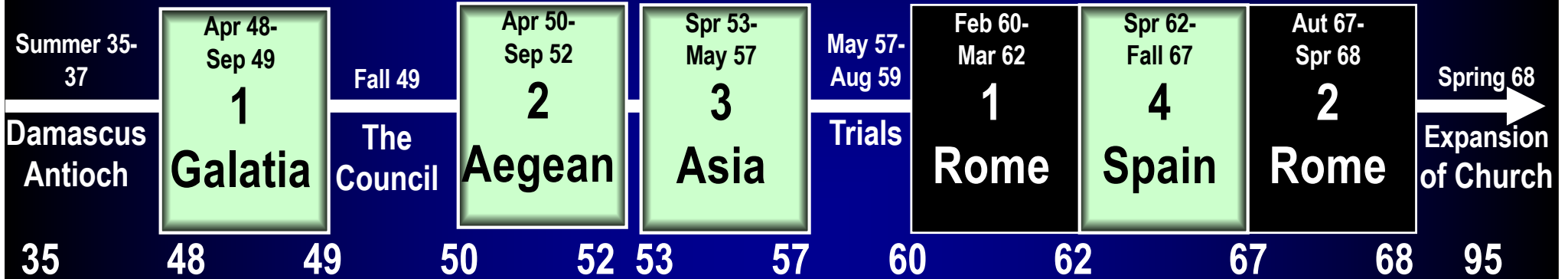


NT Overview (Paul's Letters)

38
124
39-41

"To the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

Acts 9 13 14 15 16 18 21 27 28



Matt

Luke

Acts

Mark

John

Missionary

- Justify
- Rapture
- Tribulation
- Sanctify
- Apostle
- Righteous

Prison

- Unity
- Deity
- Forgive
- Attitude

Pastoral

- 1 Tim
- 2 Tim
- Titus

Gospels & Acts

Pauline Epistles

1234

Journeys

Rome

Imprisonments

Paul's Epistles in Mostly Scriptural Order

Foundational	Prison	Prophetic	Pastoral
Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians	Ephesians Philippians Colossians Philemon	1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians	1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus
Christ & the Cross	Christ & the Church	Christ & the Second Coming	Christ & the Congregation
Soteriology	Christology	Eschatology	Ecclesiology

Which letters are Prison Epistles?

- Ephesians
- Colossians
- Philemon
- Philippians



Why call them "Prison Epistles"?

They refer to Paul's bonds (cf. Acts 28:16):

- Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20
- Col. 4:3, 18
- Philem. 1, 9, 10
- Phil. 1:13-14

Who carried these letters?

1. Tychicus

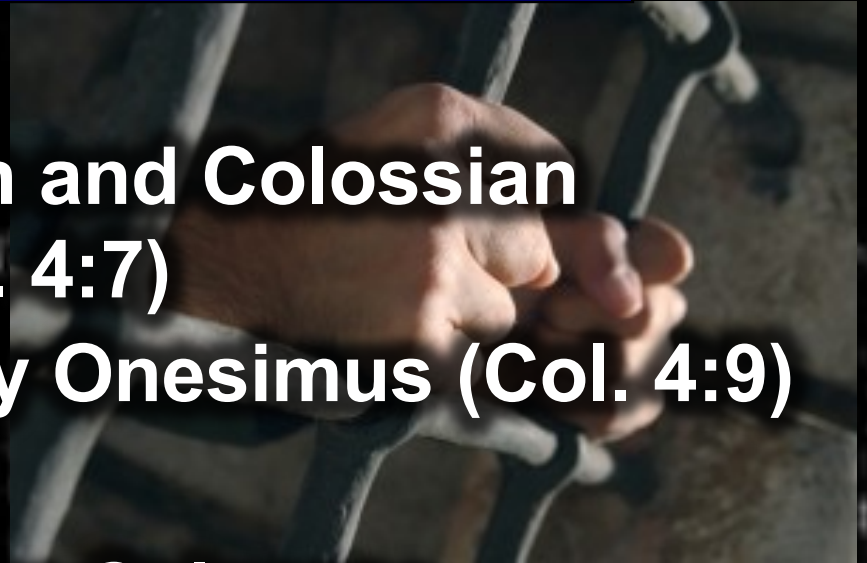
- He carried the Ephesian and Colossian epistles (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7)
- He was accompanied by Onesimus (Col. 4:9)

2. Onesimus

- A slave to Philemon from Colossae
- He probably carried the Epistle to Philemon when he returned to his master, though it is not specifically mentioned (Philem. 12)

3. Epaphroditus

- A man from Philippi, he carried the Philippian letter back to his people (Phil. 2:25, 28)

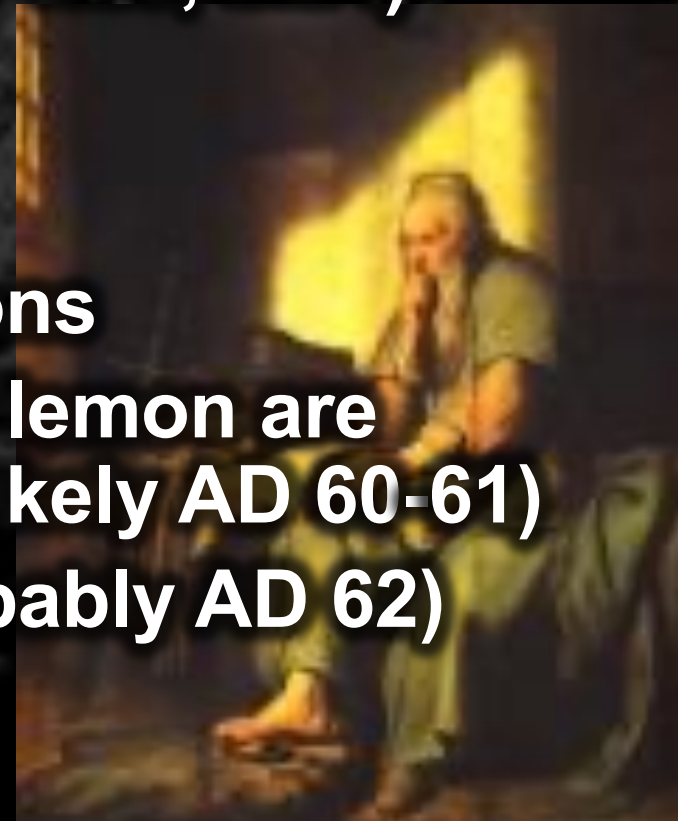


What was Paul's attitude?

- In Philemon, Paul was hopeful (*ἐλπίζω* = hope) that he would be released (Philemon 22)
- In Philippians, Paul was confident (*οἶδα* know) that he would be released (Phil. 1:25; 2:24)

Order & Setting

- Written on 2-3 separate occasions
- Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon are written around the same time (likely AD 60-61)
- Philippians is written later (probably AD 62)



Occasion for Prison Epistles

- Paul was imprisoned in Rome and Epaphras was with him
- He first wrote a general circular letter for Gentile churches in Asia Minor (**Ephesians**)
- Onesimus, a runaway slave, later joined them
- Paul received news of a crisis in the Colossian church (heresy)
- He sent Tychicus with a letter to address the **Colossian** problems
- He also sent Onesimus with Tychicus with a letter to **Philemon**

Some months later (AD 62)...

- Paul was still in prison
- The Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul
- Paul found out from him problems in Philippian church: external opposition (3:17f.) and internal disunity (4:2)
- Epaphroditus became very sick (Phil. 2:26)
- Paul sent him back with a letter to address problems of the **Philippians**

The Prison Epistles



Ephesians
Colossians
Philemon
Philippians

Critique this picture...

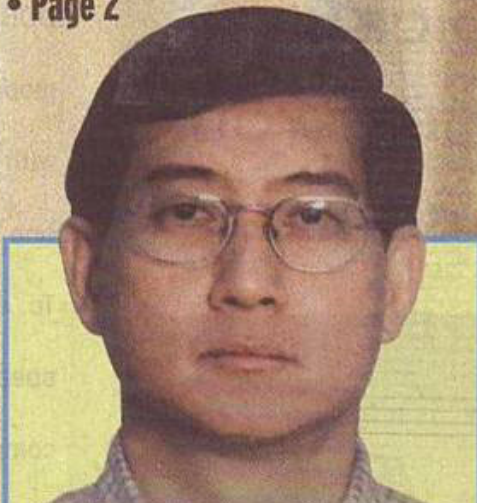
- Paul typically had a scribe write (Rom 16:22)
- Paul was under house arrest (Acts 28:30-31)
- Paul was chained to a guard (Acts 28:16)
- Paul was ≤ 60 years old (not 80 like this man!)

GO TO JAIL

LIFE

for Pakistan's ex-PM
Nawaz Sharif, found
guilty of terrorism

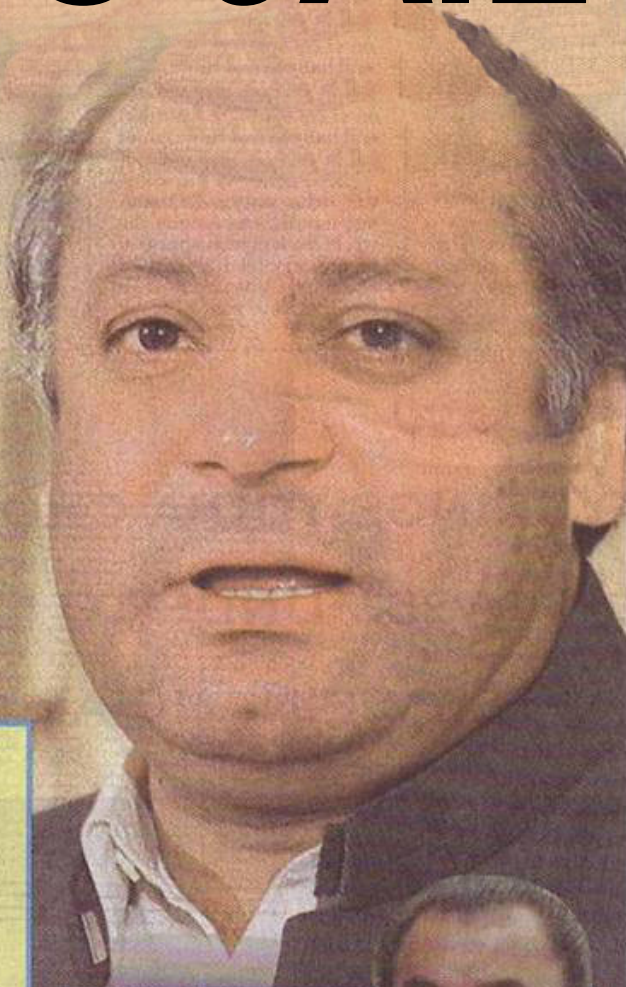
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7 MONTHS

for church deacon who
rented flat to illegals

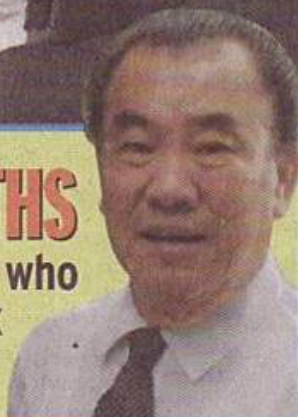
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2 MONTHS

for tycoon who
evaded tax

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Sometimes Christians are Treated Unfairly

1. Paul was—and ended up under house arrest in Rome
2. Note that a deacon appears with a terrorist & tax cheat

ST 7 April 2000
4

CJ to church man: Sorry, you must go to jail

Mandatory penalty means deacon can't be spared jail even though he rented flat to illegal immigrants unwittingly

enders were arrested. Seow, who has three children, was convicted in November of harbouring them and sentenced to seven months' jail. In appealing against both the conviction and sentence...

mits, which he glanced at be-

Prison Epistle Christology

201a



	Christ as...	Focus	Explanation
Ephesians	Head	Unity of Christ	Christ breaks down barriers between believers
Philippians	Example	Attitude of Christ	Christ models how to handle difficulty
Colossians	God	Deity of Christ	Christ is superior to human philosophies
Philemon	Reconciler	Forgiveness of Christ	Christ reconciles believers to God and one another

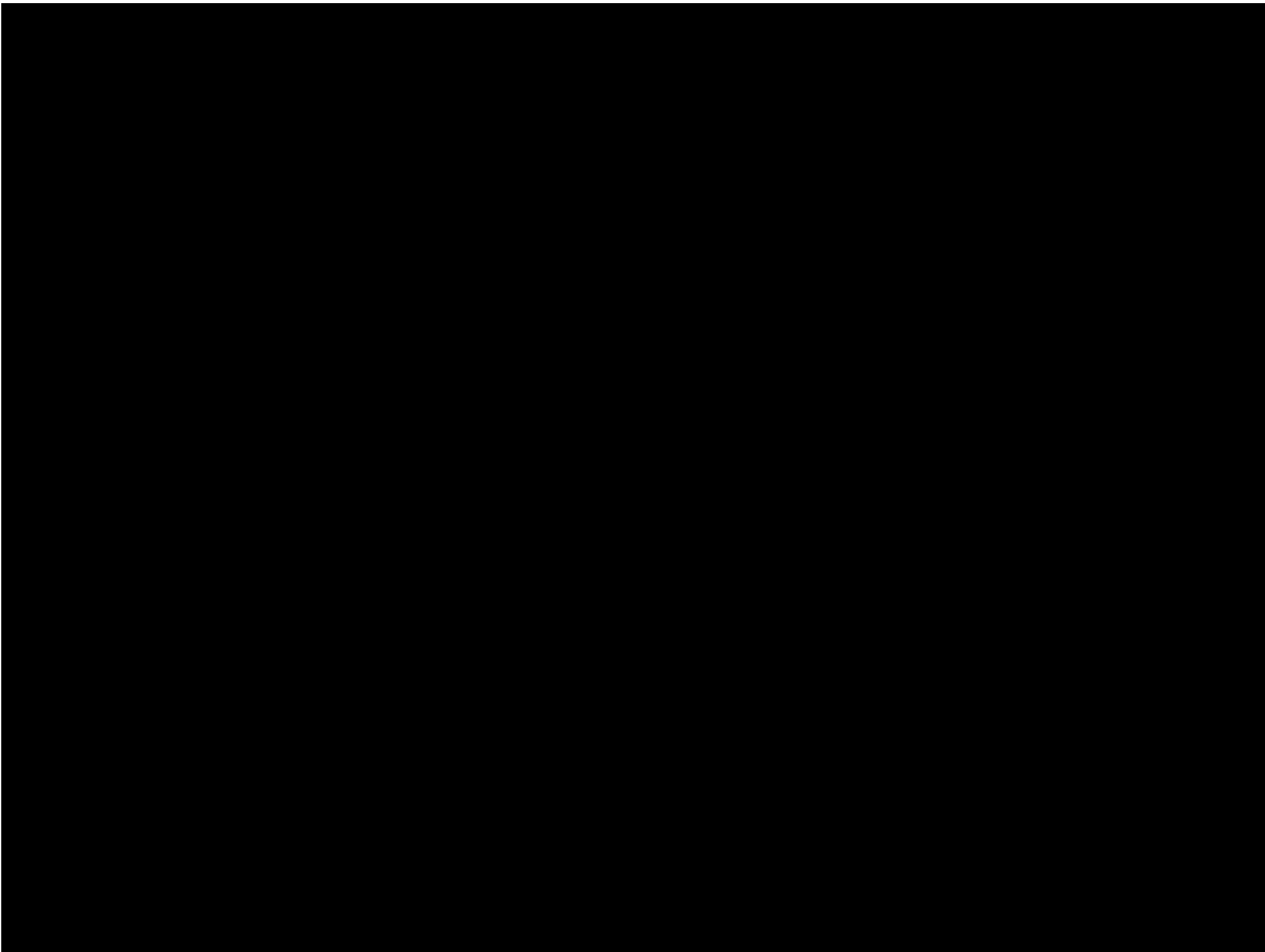
Applying the Prison Epistles

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Epistle	1st Century Problem	21st Century Problem	Solution (Theme)
Ephesians	Jew-Gentile Conflicts ("Weism")	Chinese Only Baptist Only Adults Only	Realize Christian Unity (4:3)
Philippians	Persecution Prison Death	Ministry Inconvenience - time, sleep - recreation	Imitate Christ's Attitude (2:5)
Colossians	Denying Christ's Deity	New Age Cults	Proclaim His Deity (2:9)
Philemon	Master/Slave ("Meism")	Forgive Boss / Employee / Others	Reconcile the Relationship (vv. 17-18)

How Do You Respond to Trials?

You say...	Strategy	Temperament	Epistle
"I'm right!"	Push through	Choleric	Ephesians
"Why me?"	Depression	Melancholy	Philippians
"I'll just get through"	Compromise	Sanguine	Colossians
"It'll pass"	Ignore it	Phlegmatic	Philemon



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