

Introducing the "Prison Epistles"

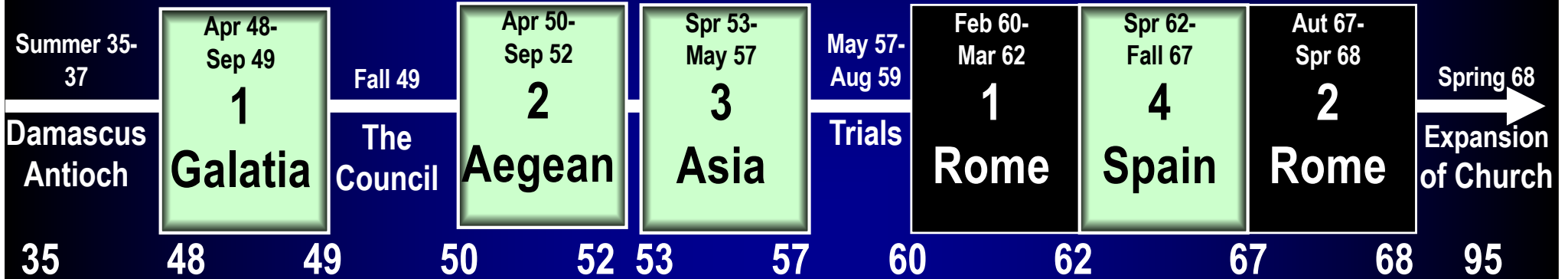


NT Overview (Paul's Letters)

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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

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Journeys

Rome

Imprisonments

Key Characteristics of Acts

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A. Kingdom



Start

"So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, 'Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and **restore our kingdom?**'"
(Acts 1:6 NLT)



End

"For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, ³¹**boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God** and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him" (Acts 28:30-31 NLT).

Paul's Epistles in Mostly Scriptural Order

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

Date	Book	Key Word	Paul's Life	Key Doctrine
40s	Matthew	Kingdom		Ecclesiology
44-47	James	Works		Soteriology
49	Galatians	Justification	1st journey	Soteriology
51	1 Thessalonians	Rapture	2nd journey	Eschatology
51	2 Thessalonians	Tribulation	2nd journey	Eschatology
56	1 Corinthians	Sanctification	3rd journey	Ecclesiology
56	2 Corinthians	Apostleship	3rd journey	Ecclesiology
56-57	Romans	Righteousness	3rd journey	Soteriology
57-59	Luke	Sovereignty I		Missiology

Date	Book	Key Word	Paul's Life	Key Doctrine
60	Ephesians	Unity	1st imprisonment	Christology (Head)
61	Colossians	Deity	1st imprisonment	Christology (God)
61	Philemon	Forgiveness	1st imprisonment	Christology (Reconciler)
62	Philippians	Attitude	1st imprisonment	Christology (Example)
62	Acts	Sovereignty II		Missiology
62	1 Timothy	Order	4th journey	Ecclesiology
64	1 Peter	Suffering		Eschatology
64	2 Peter	Knowledge		Eschatology
64-68	Mark	Discipleship		Eschatology

NT Book Keywords

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Date	Book	Key Word	Paul's Life	Key Doctrine
66	Titus	Conduct	4th journey	Ecclesiology
67	2 Timothy	Doctrine	2nd imprisonment	Ecclesiology
67-68	Hebrews	Superiority		Christology
c. 69	John	Belief		Soteriology
75	Jude	Pretenders		Eschatology
85-95	1 John	Love		Soteriology
85-95	2 John	Limits		Missiology
85-95	3 John	Missionaries		Missiology
95-96	Revelation	Triumph		Eschatology

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

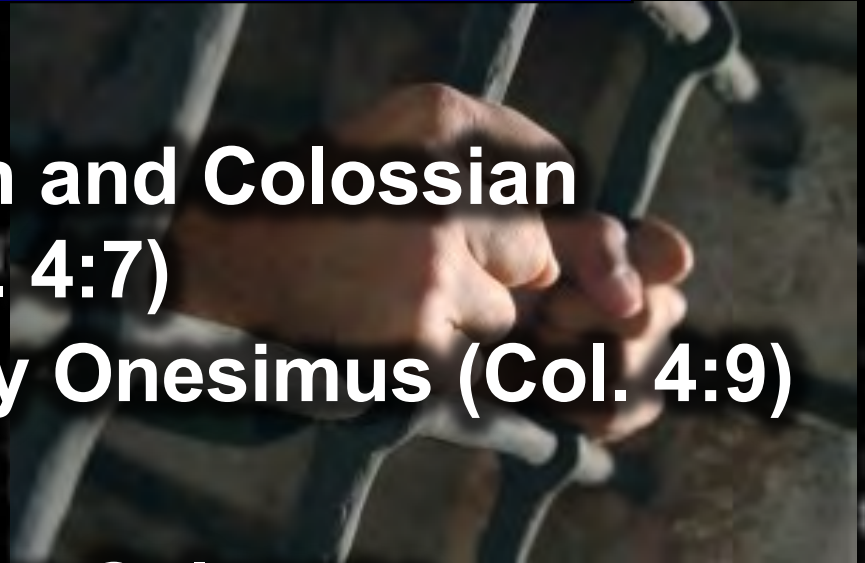
- He carried the Ephesian and Colossian epistles (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7)
- He was accompanied by Onesimus (Col. 4:9)

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)

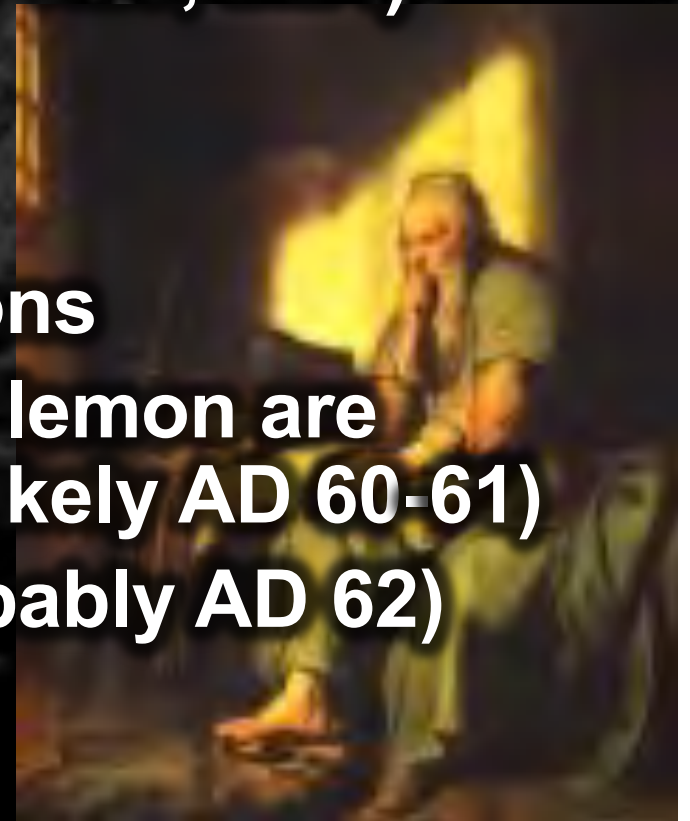


What was Paul's attitude?

- 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...

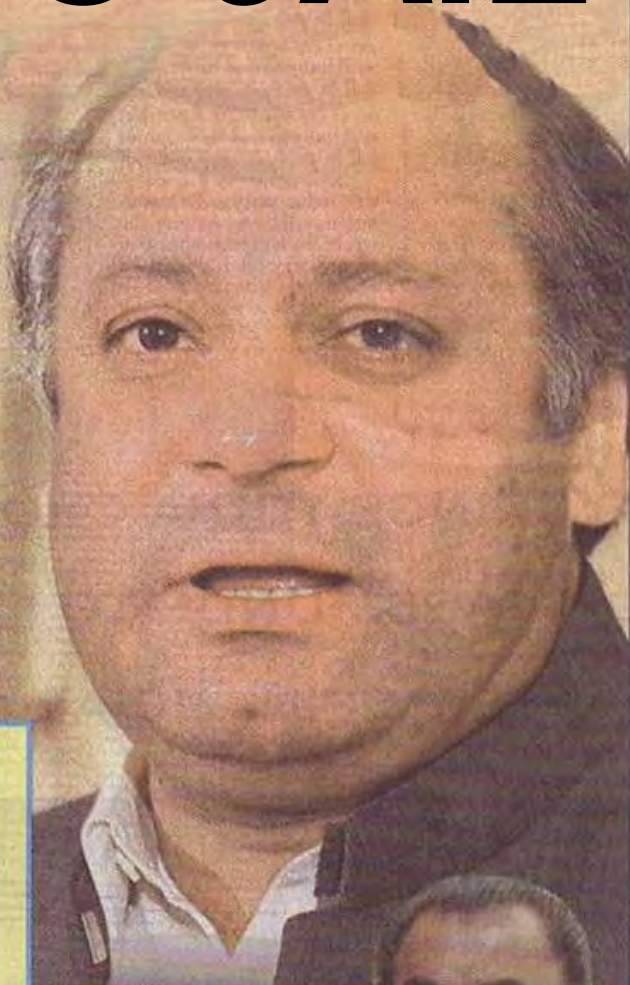
- Paul typically had a scribe write (Rom 16:22)
- Paul was under house arrest (Acts 28:30-31)
- Paul was chained to a guard (Acts 28:16)
- Paul was ≤ 60 years old (not 80 like this man!)

GO TO JAIL

LIFE

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

• Page 2



7 MONTHS

for church deacon who
rented flat to illegals

• Page 4

2 MONTHS

for tycoon who
evaded tax

• Page 3



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
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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 eland at be...

Prison Epistle Christology

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	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

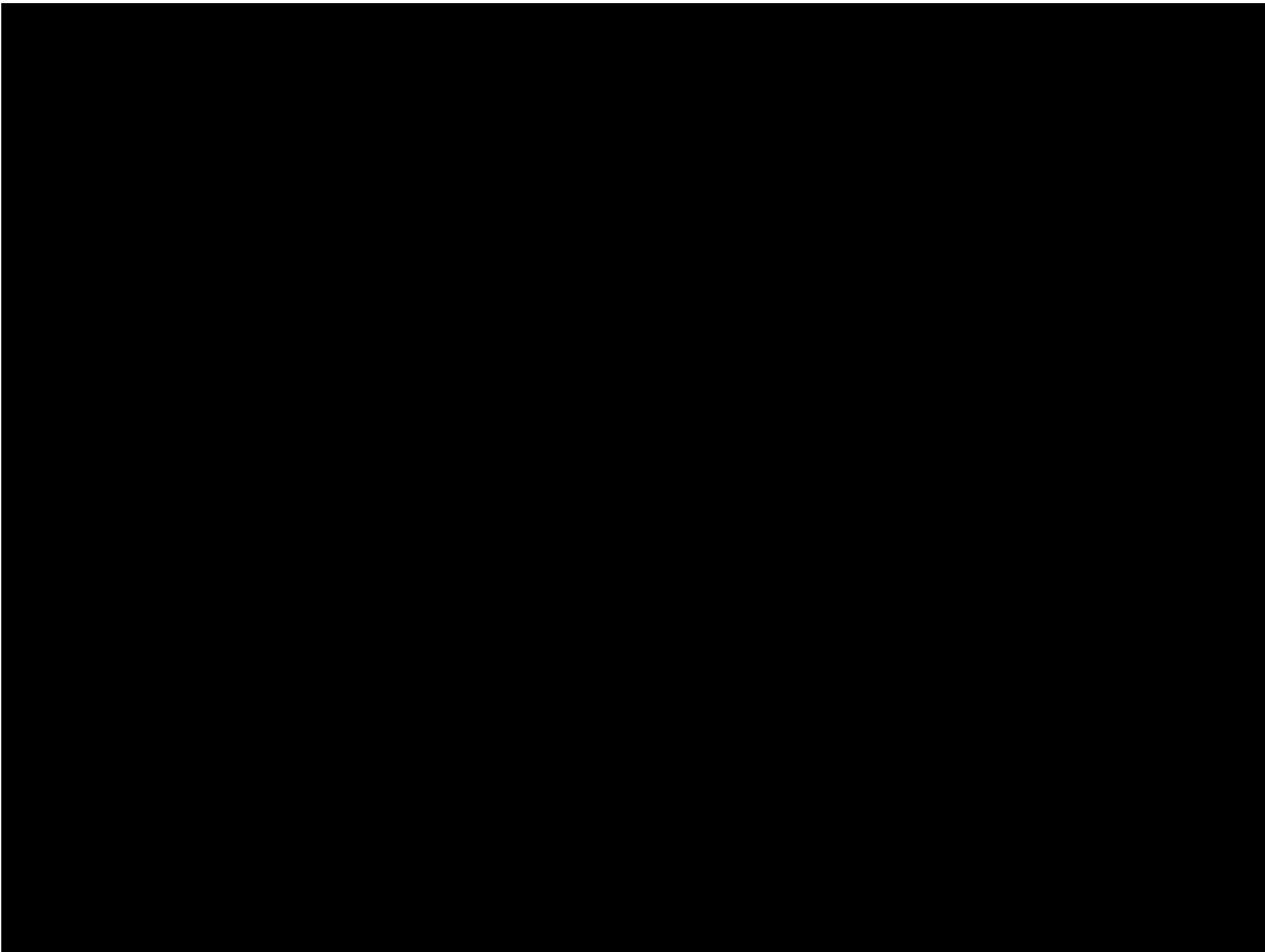
Applying the Prison Epistles

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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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