

**READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 2021 Week 34 (August 23-27)**

*("Let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly" ... and bear fruit in our lives) – Colossians 3:16.*

**Historical Context** (Paul's third missionary trip).

**60-62 AD** This is the approximate time of the writing of what are called "Paul's Prison Letters". Paul wrote these four letters from Rome. They are: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.

In what order were they written? We may have some help from references to Paul's chains (as noted in the Greek text).

- Philippians mentions Paul's chains four times; and appears to be the letter in which Paul is most suffering.
- Philemon mentions Onesimus as a comfort while Paul is in chains twice.
- Colossians end with a single reference "remember my chains".
- Ephesians – while noting that Paul is still a prisoner – does not mention chains at all. Is this, then, the order in which they were written?

This order may be in keeping with Paul arriving in Rome as a prisoner in chains (Acts 28:17); and ending with Paul living "there for two whole years at his own expense ... proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ ... without hindrance" (Acts 18:30-31).

In keeping with this order, we note:

- Philippians ends with a "thank you" to the Philippians for helping him with a gift that came via Epaphroditus. This letter goes back with Epaphroditus. And because of the gift, Paul is "fully satisfied" (Philippians 4:18). This gift may have provided the comfort from which the other three letters are written.
- In Philemon, Paul is "returning" a slave, that Paul claims to have freed by the gifts Philemon has received from Paul. It is a letter that frees Philemon from having to live on the run.
- In Colossians 4:4-7, we learn that Tychicus will be accompanied by Onesimus when Tychicus delivers this letter. It also appears that Onesimus is a slave from Colossae, as Onesimus is described as "one of you" (Colossians 4:9). This suggests that Philemon, Onesimus' owner, also lived in Colossae. If this is the case, then would not the letter to Philemon also be a necessary introduction so that Onesimus can be effective in the church in Colossae?
- In Ephesians, Paul states that Tychicus will also deliver to Ephesus. Ephesus is on the way to Colossae. It is the Aegean Sea port at the mouth of the Lycus River. Colossae is to the east, at the other end of the valley. Does it not make sense that all three letters were written to be delivered on the same trip?

<u>Day</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Clarification from original language – Greek word in parentheses</u>
Mon.	Philippians 1 (:26)	<b>Boast</b> = (Kauchaema) The object of the boast / what one is proud of.
Tues.	Philippians 2 (:13)	<b>Works</b> = (Energyoon) This is not the same as simply laboring, or bringing about something. This has more the idea of “energizing”: of being active within so as to cause something to happen, to – as it were – to pull on the oars so that the oars move the boat through the water.
Wed.	Philippians 3 (:21)	<b>Subject</b> = (Hupotaxai) To place under / to subdue / to place beneath one’s authority.
Thurs.	Philippians 4 (:7)	<b>Guard</b> = (Phrouraesei) Literally to pay attention to something: so as to keep safe, keep in custody, preserve it. It is used of soldiers at the city gates both preventing and allowing the safe entrance and leaving.
Fri.	Philemon 1 (:17)	<b>Partner</b> = (Koinoonon) Companion / partner / mutual sharer.

Sources: [www.thebiblejourney.org](http://www.thebiblejourney.org); ; [www.datingthenewtestament.com](http://www.datingthenewtestament.com);  
[www.bibleplaces.com/colossae](http://www.bibleplaces.com/colossae); [casualenglishbible.com](http://casualenglishbible.com); [googleamps](https://www.google.com); [The Interlinear NIV, Parallel New Testament in Greek and English](#); [Dictionary of New Testament Theology](#), Vols. 1-3; [The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament](#).  
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