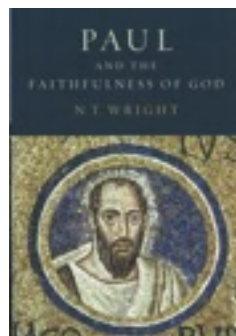


This morning we will continue our series on Paul's early letters. Paul's early letters all focused on establishing his young churches in the gospel.

We finished 1 Corinthians, and the last two sessions we turned our attention to 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians is a very different type of letter since it is not primarily focusing on the kerygma and didache, but rather on Paul's relationship with the Corinthians.

Why would he devote a large letter to his relationship with the Corinthians? We will continue addressing this issue this morning.

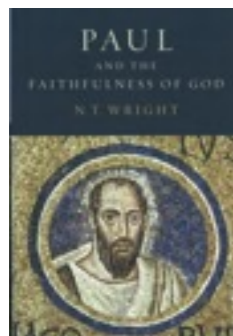


This morning we will look at how Paul shaped the churches to contribute financially to the progress of the gospel, and how it is evidence in our own lives of how well we are founded in that gospel, in a very real way.

I have the opportunity of seeing churches as networks worldwide—in this very real way—to see how well they are established in the gospel by how they view giving money.

- The India churches: very poor, very dependent on the West
- The Chinese churches: very local focussed on their own networks; the USA Chinese churches: very “network” individualistic—one time
- The USA churches: nationally give around 1.3 percent of their incomes (ok, let’s make it a law: 21.7%) - wealthy % - foundations - billion dollar business - moderate salaries

Paul’s Early Epistles



In this 21st century, there is a huge need, in networks of churches worldwide, to understand this theology of sacrificial giving to the progress of the gospel; it is evidence of how well we are established in the gospel. (repeat 3xs)

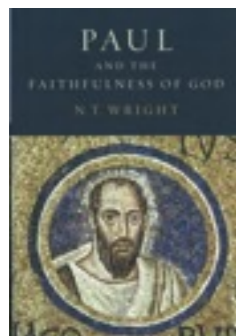
Last week I raised the issue of how weird we seem as churches because of our unusual commitment to that progress of the gospel through participation worldwide. That was evidenced in the report I gave last week on France, North Africa “Arab Spring” countries, the Balkans (Albania, Kosovo, and Ukraine), and the Chinese house churches. (70%)

How did you respond?

We’ve done our part, now let’s focus locally?

We have excelled here!!! Now let’s excel still more!

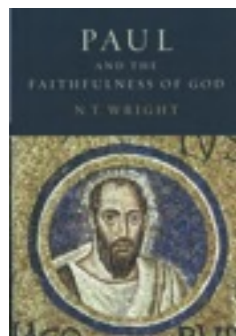
Paul’s Early Epistles



Passage: 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15

Questions:

1. How would you describe Paul's perspective on networks of churches sacrificially contributing to the progress of the gospel?
2. In what way were the Macedonian churches a model to the Achaia churches?
3. Why were the Corinthian churches in danger of not fulfilling their commitment to the churches in Jerusalem?
4. What were the benefits to the Corinthian churches, both as a model and the personal benefits as well?



The Early Letters

Book 1: The Early Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches in the Gospel

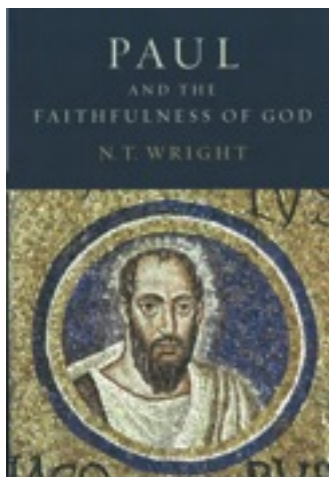
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

Book 3: The Thessalonian Correspondence: Conversion to the Gospel

Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Book 6: Romans: Complete Treatise of Paul's Gospel



Book 1: *The Early Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches in the Gospel*

Session 1: The Intent of The Early Letters

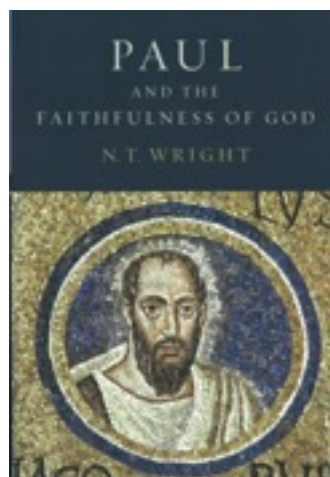
Session 2: The Galatian Problem

Session 3: The Thessalonian Conversion

Session 4: The Corinthian Schisms

Session 5: The Roman Treatise

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 2: *Paul's Early Letters: The Galatian Problem*

Session 1: The Galatian Problem

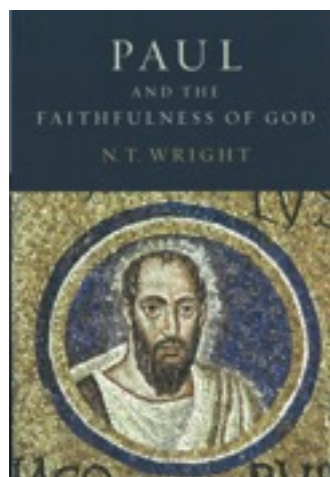
Session 2: The Pure Gospel

Session 3: The Gospel as a System of Living

Session 4: The Gospel and Walking in the Spirit

Session 5: The Gospel and Respecting Leaders

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 3: *Paul's Early Letters: The Thessalonians' Conversion*

Session 1: Paul's Concern for the Thessalonians

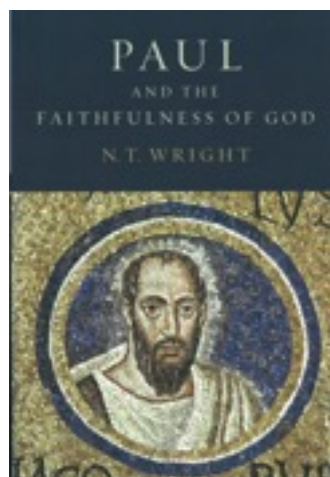
Session 2: Their Dramatic Conversion

Session 3: Three Emerging Problems—Letter 1

Session 4: Further Clarification—Letter 2

Session 5: Solidifying Their Conversion

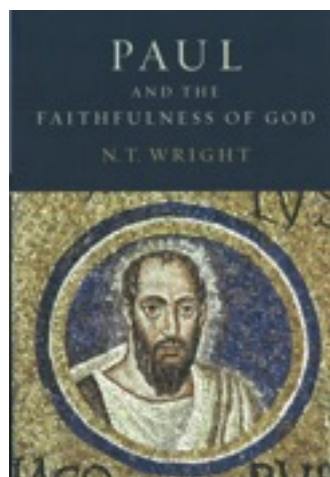
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

- Session 1: The Fragmentation of the Gospel
- Session 2: Building on One Foundation: The Traditions
- Session 3: Divisions in their Community Life
- Session 4: Divisions in their Community Gatherings
- Session 5: Back to the Gospel Foundations
- Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

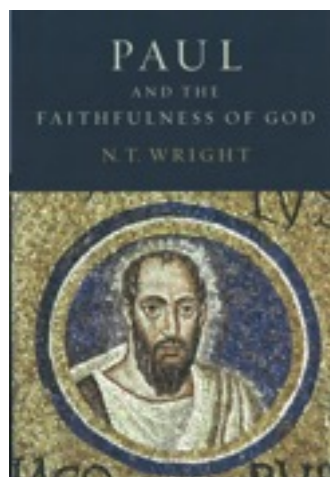
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry

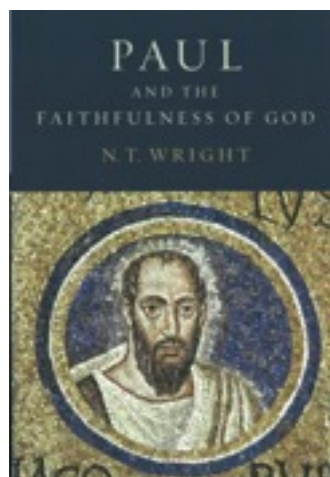


Paul's Early Epistles

The intention of these early letters was to establish the churches in the gospel.

Paul broadens the understanding of the gospel, and roots the solutions to the problems his churches were encountering to that growing and broadening understanding of the kerygma and its implications.

This intention will become clearer and clearer as each letter unfolds.



Paul's Early Epistles

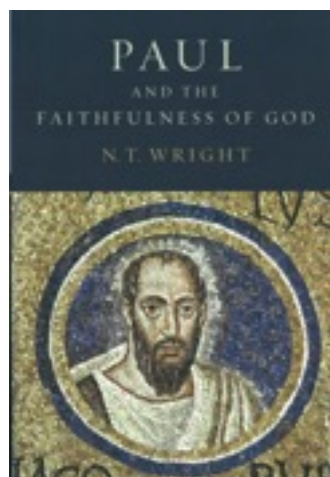
We will validate this in the six books of this series, as we look at the correspondence of these early letters:

The Galatian letter

The Thessalonian correspondence

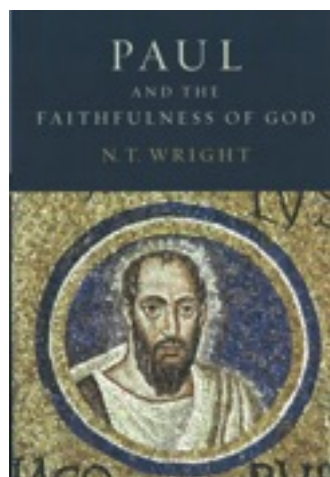
The Corinthian correspondence (2)

The letter to the Romans



Paul's Early Epistles

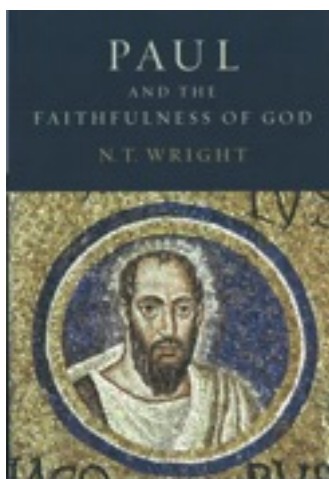
Quite a bit of background is needed to grasp the answers to the questions concerning the basic problems Paul was having with the Corinthian churches and to begin reconstructing Paul's intent in writing them.



Paul's Early Epistles

All of this background is found in the letters and the book of Acts.

In addition, as we attempt to grasp the intention of these letters, we will rely on a wealth of early Graeco–Roman research, as gathered by a set of scholars over the last 40 years.

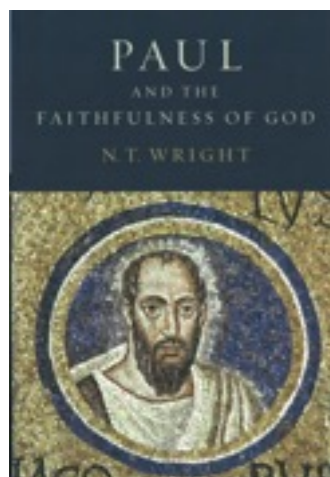


Paul's Early Epistles

The key work and author carrying the conversation is

The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth by Gerd Theissen (Fortress, 1982).

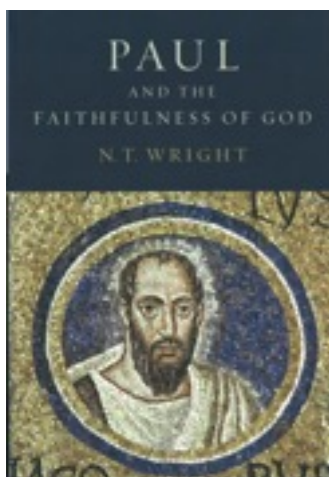
Like Malherbe's *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophical Tradition of Pastoral Care*, usually one author brings it down to the churches.



Paul's Early Epistles

Another book has 22 Graeco-Roman essays on the Corinthian church and summarizes all the key areas of the conversation:

Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church, edited by Edward Adams and David G. Horrell (WJK, 2004).

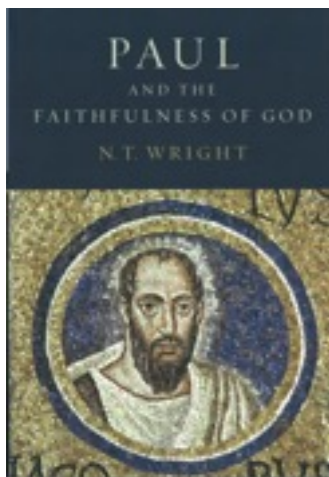


Paul's Early Epistles

Two books contribute to getting on top of the conversation:

Beginning From Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making, Volume 2, by James D. G. Dunn (Eerdman, 2009).

This contains a summary of almost all the current research on the “quest for the historical church.” See these sections on the Corinthian churches: “The Founding of the Church at Corinth” pages 692–702 and the 4 Corinthian letters, pages 780–857.

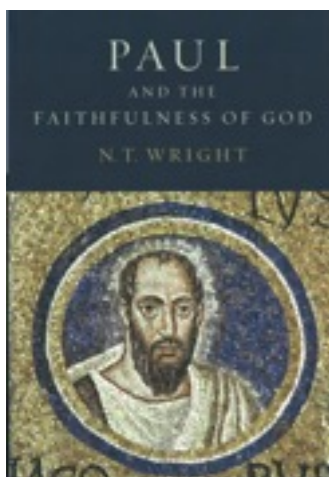


Paul's Early Epistles

A second book that contributes to getting on top of the conversation is:

Dictionary of the Letters of Paul: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship, editors: Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (IVP, 1993).

The key article is “Corinthians, the Letters of” pages 164–179.



Paul's Early Epistles

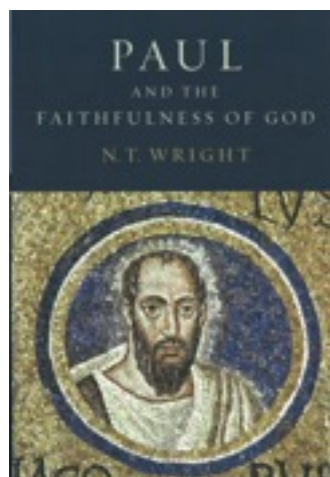
Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

To defend his apostleship in the Corinthian churches, for which he was uniquely commissioned, that they might remain in his sphere of authority and therefore participate fully in the progress amongst the Gentiles

by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship.

by describing the heart of the ministry of the gospel, “conflicts without and fears within,” as a context for victorious progress.

by defending his apostleship and seeking the Corinthians as partners in that progress.



Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

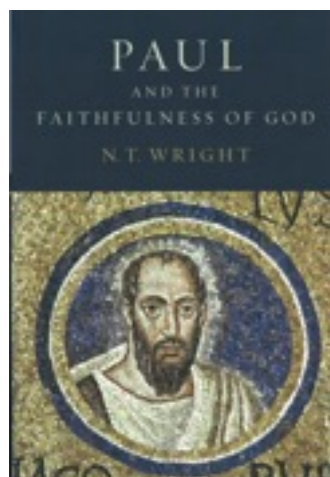
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry

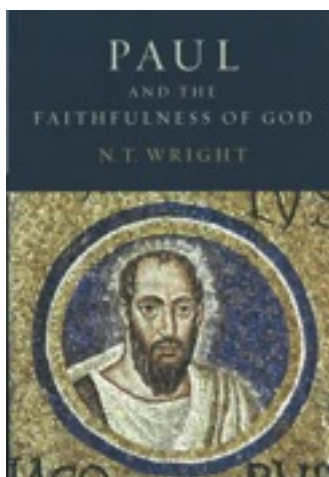


Paul's Early Epistles

We looked at 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:11, which served as an introduction, enabling an understanding of Paul’s intention in writing the letters.

It set a framework for understanding Paul’s philosophy of ministry.

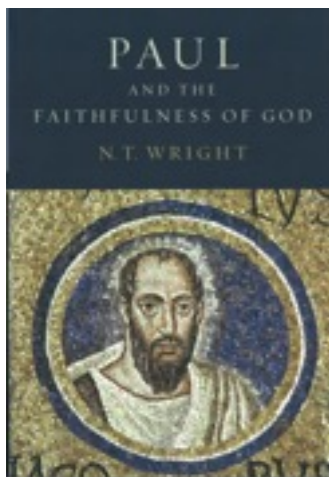
We concluded the following . . .



What do we learn so far about Paul's philosophy?

Paul's Philosophy of ministry:

- If we are not fully engaged in the progress of the gospel beyond our own sphere, we are not established in the gospel.
- Getting a church founded will involve a significant amount of strong leadership and confrontation.
- Progress of the gospel is very demanding, and it demands churches that fully participate in that expansion.
- Those on the front lines should expect constant pressure, deep discouragement, and a lot of criticism.
- Apostolic leaders must be able to make convincing, authoritative arguments to defend their authority, teaching, and ministry sphere.



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

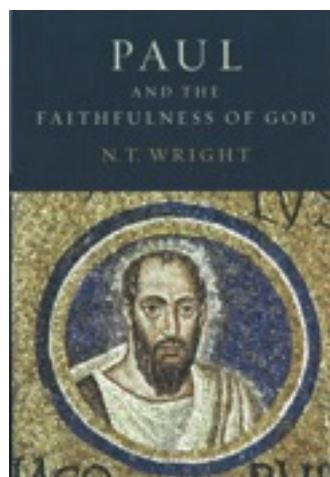
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

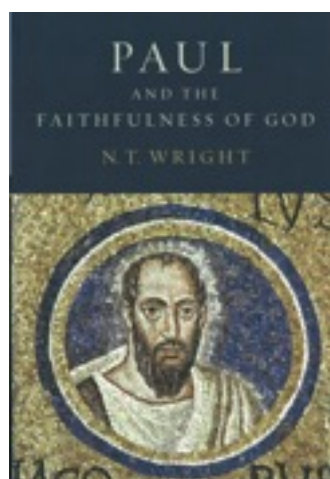
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

This session focused on 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5.

In this passage, Paul unfolds his perspective of ministry in the context of all his external conflicts and internal fears, which enables us to see clearly what real success in ministry is.



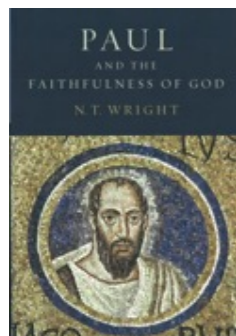
Paul's Early Epistles

¹² However, when I came to Troas to announce the Messiah's gospel, and found an open door waiting for me in the Lord, ¹³ I couldn't get any quietness in my spirit because I didn't find my brother Titus there. So I left them and went off to Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 2:12–13 N. T. Wright

⁵ You see, even when we arrived in Macedonia, we couldn't relax or rest. We were troubled in every way; there were battles outside and fears inside.

2 Corinthians 7:5 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

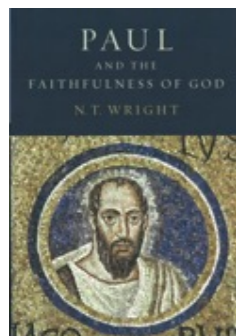
From a literary standpoint, Paul frames in his argument on his perspective of ministry. How does he think about his ministry in the context of all the conflicts and internal fears?

He unfolds a well thought out, deeply theological personal perspective of ministry.

2:12–13 He leaves a wide open door for the gospel.

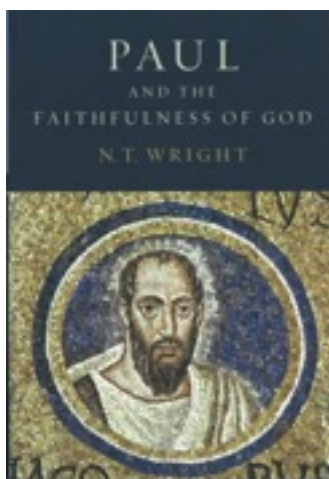
7:5 He arrives in Macedonia.

In between these verses, he unfolds his deeply thought through perspective.



Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5):

1. Christ’s building of his kingdom is a “triumphal march” (which he is accomplishing through building His Church). But the process will be one battle after another, in which some will grow closer to His kingdom and some will be driven farther away. 2:14–17
2. Leaders are qualified as stewards of the New Covenant (not by our own merits), and as we proclaim the good news, the Spirit writes the words of the covenant on the hearts of those who believe and will transform them into the glory of the Lord himself. 3:1–18

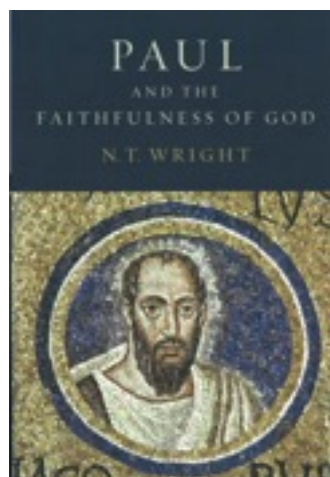


Paul's "theology of perspective on ministry"—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12-7:5):

3. We do not lose heart because we are simply clay pots filled with the glory of Christ, and when under all kinds of pressure the cracks allow others to see Christ (except those who are perishing). The entire process of our outer man decaying is producing inner renewal day by day, and an eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:1–17
4. We will be given new bodies like Christ's when our old one is destroyed, and we will appear before Christ in the future to give an account of our ministry as ambassadors for Christ; therefore, we need to press on in our ministry recognizing that we are new creations in process and see all believers through this lens. 2 Corinthians 5:1–21

Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5):

5. We should anticipate a massive set of external and internal conflicts as we serve as ambassadors for Christ and view these conflicts as the process of Christ building His kingdom through His churches and motivating true, sacrificial participation of churches in this ministry. 2 Corinthians 6:1–18



Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

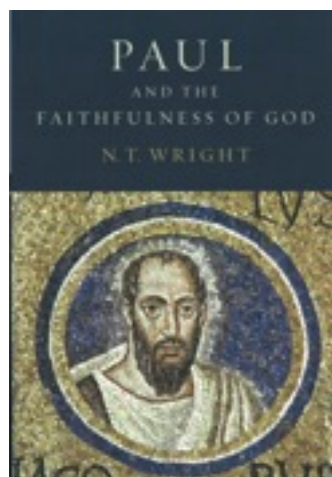
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

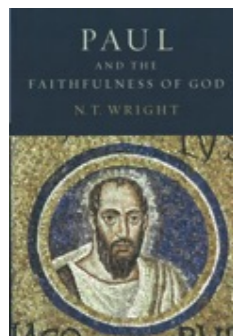
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

¹Now when it comes to the collection for God's people, you should do the same as I laid down for the churches in Galatia. ²On the first day of each week, every one of you should set aside and store up whatever surplus you have gained, so that when I come I won't have to take an actual collection. ³Then, when I get to you, I will write formal letters to send the people you approve, whoever they are, to Jerusalem with your gift. ⁴If it's appropriate for me to go as well, we can travel together.

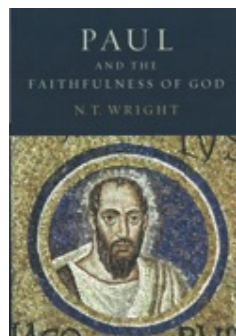
1 Corinthians 16:1–4 (NT Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

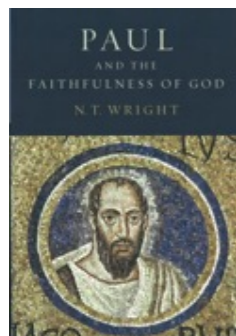
The setting for 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15 was given by Paul's summary of a massive collection for the Jerusalem churches.

He evidently appealed to his whole network of churches to contribute toward a large collection to assist the churches in Jerusalem.



We learn several things about a collection to be taken by the churches of Paul's network.

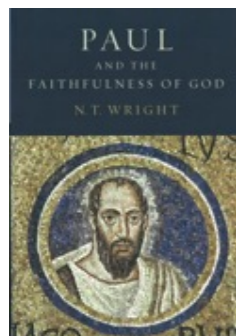
- The collection was for the churches of Jerusalem.
- Paul was building a network, as he refers here to the churches of Galatia (as you will see refers to the example of the Macedonian churches in 2 Corinthians 8:1).
- The collection of each network was to be built over a several month period.
- It was to be accompanied by leaders from each network to assure accountability for the large gift,



Two whole chapters are devoted to this gift. Why?

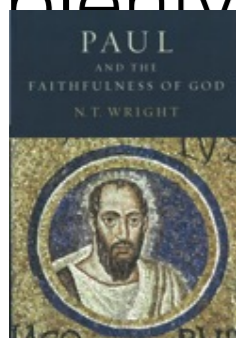
Several practical reasons; but again, in the throes of driving their commitment to this massive gift for the Jerusalem churches, we see how Paul shapes the churches' theology of giving to the progress of the gospel.

As you will see, being founded in the gospel means being committed to its progress (Acts: Jerusalem, Judea, and the whole world).



Paul's Early Epistles

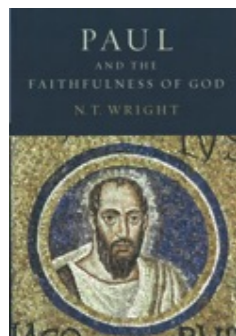
¹Let me tell you, my dear family, about the grace which God has given to the Macedonian churches. ²They have been sorely tested by suffering. But the abundance of grace which was given to them, and the depths of poverty they have endured, have overflowed in a wealth of sincere generosity on their part. ³I bear them witness that of their own accord, up to their ability and even beyond their ability, ⁴they begged us eagerly to let them have the privilege of sharing in the work of service for God's people. ⁵They didn't just do what we had hoped; they gave themselves, first to the Lord, and then to us as God willed it. ⁶This put us in a position where we could encourage Titus that he should complete this work of grace that he had begun among you. ⁷You have plenty of everything, after all— plenty of faith, and speech, and knowledge, and all kinds of eagerness, and plenty of love coming from us to you; so why not have plenty of this grace too?



2 Corinthians 8:1–7 (N. T. Wright)
Paul's Early Epistles

Paul's Theology of Giving as Part of Churches Being Established in the Gospel

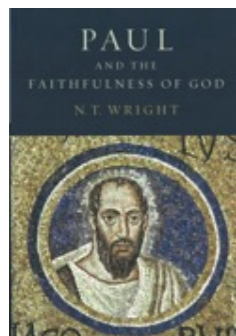
1. Networks of churches (Macedonian example), even if they are poor, need to sacrificially give to the progress of the gospel and the building of networks of churches worldwide—a vital model and motivation to others.
2. We need to take collections as churches to contribute to the progress of the gospel, to support apostolic team work (Paul receive a gift from Ephesus via Titus, which freed him up, and Paul used the need of the Jerusalem churches to build the network of networks.)
3. Churches need to think in terms of themselves as networks (Macedonian churches, Galatian churches, Achaia churches; China 5 families, India networks, etc.)



Paul's Early Epistles

Paul's Theology of Giving as Part of Churches Being Established in the Gospel

4. Networks like Achaia (especially like Corinth), which have a wealth of gifts and resources, are not fully established if they do not excel in using their financial resources to progress the gospel.

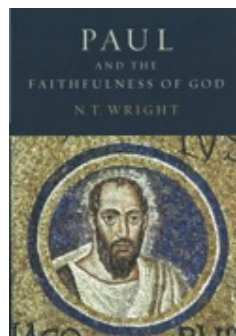


⁸I'm not saying this as though I was issuing an order. It's a matter of putting their enthusiasm and your own love side by side, and making sure you genuinely pass the test. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord, King Jesus: he was rich, but because of you he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰Let me give you my serious advice on this: you began to be keen on this idea, and to start putting it into practice, a whole year ago; it will now be greatly to your advantage ¹¹to complete your performance of it. If you do so, your finishing the job as far as you are able will be on the same scale as your eagerness in wanting to do it. ¹²If the eagerness is there, you see, the deed is acceptable, according to what you have, not according to what you don't have. ¹³The point is not, after all, that others should get off lightly and you be made to suffer, but rather that there should be equality. ¹⁴At the present time your abundance can contribute to their lack, so that their abundance can contribute to your lack. That's what makes for equality, ¹⁵just as the Bible says: "The one who had much had nothing to spare, and the one who had little didn't go short."

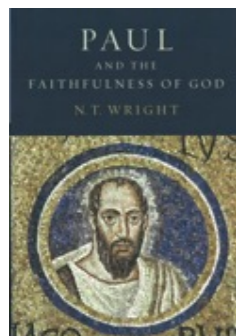
2 Corinthians 8:8–15 (N. T. Wright)

Paul's Theology of Giving as Part of Churches Being Established in the Gospel

4. Networks like Achaia (especially like Corinth), which have a wealth of gifts and resources, are not fully established if they do not excel in using their financial resources to progress the gospel.
5. It is easy for churches to begin strong in their commitment, yet fail to follow through. Evidently it is even easier for churches to fail (and of course individuals) if they have significant wealth.
6. There is a sort of “movement balancing” that takes place when churches that are wealthy support church networks and movements, as may be the case of wealthy networks in the future.



¹⁶But God be thanked, since he put the same eagerness for you into Titus's heart. ¹⁷He welcomed the appeal we made, and of his own accord he was all the more eager to come to you. ¹⁸We have sent along with him the brother who is famous through all the churches because of his work for the gospel. ¹⁹Not only so, but he was formally chosen by the churches to be our traveling companion as we engage in this work of grace, both for the Lord's own glory and to show our own good faith. ²⁰We are trying to avoid the possibility that anyone would make unpleasant accusations about this splendid gift which we are administering. ²¹We are thinking ahead, you see, about what will look best, not only to the Lord, but to everybody else as well.

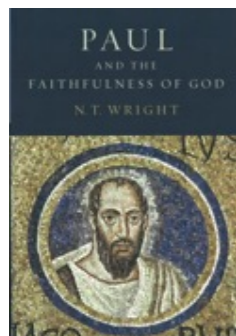


2 Corinthians 8:16–21 (N. T. Wright)

Paul's Early Epistles

²²Anyway, along with the two of them we are sending our brother, who has proved to us how eager and enthusiastic he is in many situations and on many occasions; he now seems all the more eager because he is convinced about you. ²³If there's any question about Titus, he is my partner, and a fellow worker for you. As for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the Messiah's glory. ²⁴So please give them a fine demonstration of your love, and of our boasting about you! Show all the churches that you mean business!

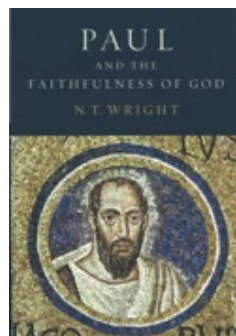
2 Corinthians 8:22–24 (N. T. Wright)



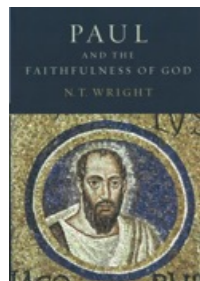
Paul's Early Epistles

Paul's Theology of Giving as Part of Churches Being Established in the Gospel

7. Part of the job of apostolic leaders is to keep networks motivated around these ideas, to make and follow through on commitments, and to see they are used in an accountable way.
8. The proof that we mean business—that we are serious about the gospel and its progression, in our own lives and churches—is to participate with our resources, specifically in giving money.



¹When it comes to the service you are doing for God's people, you see, I don't need to write to you. ²For I know your eagerness, and indeed I boasted about it to the Macedonians, saying that Achaëa had been ready since last year. Your enthusiasm has stimulated most of them into action. ³I have sent the brothers so that our boasting about you in this respect may turn out to be true— so that you may be ready, just as I said you were. ⁴Otherwise, imagine what it would be like if people from Macedonia came with me and found you weren't ready! That would bring shame on us in this business, not to say on you. ⁵So I thought it necessary to exhort the brothers that they should go on to you in advance, and get everything about your gracious gift in order ahead of time. You've already promised it, after all. Then it really will appear as a gift of grace, not something that has had to be extorted from you.

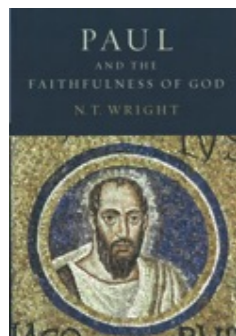


2 Corinthians 9:1–5 (N. T. Wright)

Paul's Early Epistles

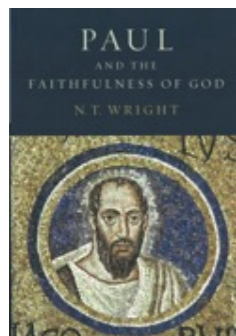
Paul's Theology of Giving as Part of Churches Being Established in the Gospel

9. Commitments to give in significant collections is contagious and motivates others (this week with a foundation who came here), so key, more wealthy churches and church networks need to take the lead.
10. Paul saw part of his “business” (the ministry is not run like a “profit” business), and that of his team, was motivating these more wealthy networks.



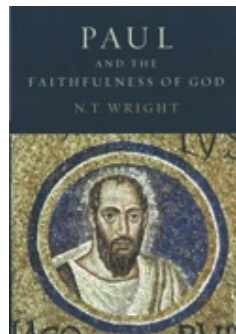
⁶This is what I mean: someone who sows sparingly will reap sparingly as well. Someone who sows generously will reap generously. ⁷Everyone should do as they have determined in their heart, not in a gloomy spirit or simply because they have to, since “God loves a cheerful giver.” ⁸And God is well able to lavish all his grace upon you, so that in every matter and in every way you will have enough of everything, and may be lavish in all your own good works, ⁹just as the Bible says:
They spread their favors wide, they gave to the poor;
Their righteousness endures forever.

2 Corinthians 9:6–9 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

¹⁰The one who supplies “seed to be sown and bread to eat” will supply and increase your seed and multiply the yield of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way in all single-hearted goodness, which is working through us to produce thanksgiving to God. ¹²The service of this ministry will not only supply what God’s people so badly need, but it will also overflow with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³Through meeting the test of this service you will glorify God in two ways: first, because your confession of faith in the Messiah’s gospel has brought you into proper order, and second, because you have entered into genuine and sincere partnership with them and with everyone. ¹⁴What’s more, they will then pray for you and long for you because of the surpassing grace God has given to you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his gift, the gift we can never fully describe!

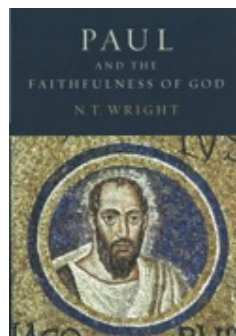


2 Corinthians 9:10–15 (N. T. Wright)

Paul's Early Epistles

Paul's Theology of Giving as Part of Churches Being Established in the Gospel

11. Churches need to understand (applies to individual households as well) that when we give in this way to the progress of the gospel we are “enriched in every way,” so the actual motivation to major giving by apostolic leadership to the churches is actually for their benefit.
12. The true, fullest motivation, though, is really coming to grips with the gift we have received from Jesus—the gospel and all its benefits, an indescribable gift—which is all part of becoming fully established in the gospel through the giving of our own gifts.

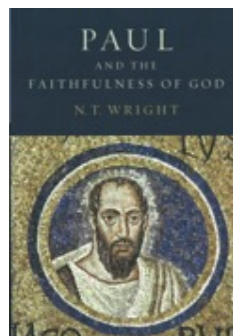


Issue: Participating in the progress of the gospel through giving of time and resources

Questions:

1. What should our perspective be on our network of churches sacrificially contributing to the progress of the gospel?
2. In this time of great expansion of the gospel globally, how should Western churches think about giving? Global South churches (i.e India, China)?
3. What are we in danger of if we ignore this element of being established in the gospel? What about churches in the West? churches in the Global South?
4. What are the benefits to our churches today, both as a model and the personal benefits as well?

Paul's Early Epistles

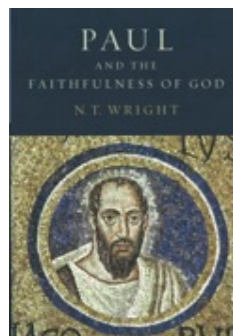


We have excelled here

Giving to the “progress of the gospel,” especially as the India opportunity expanded (\$2 million, matching our general budget annually)

\$80,000 a year collection for international teams at conference here, plus using our homes and time (a value of \$450,000 to \$500,000 a year)

During that time, about 70% of all our giving went to the progress of the gospel, which includes here too!!! (our resource center and supporting the apostolic team benefits the progress here too)



Paul's Early Epistles

Our challenge today: “excel still more”

Need: \$150,000 for our team here.

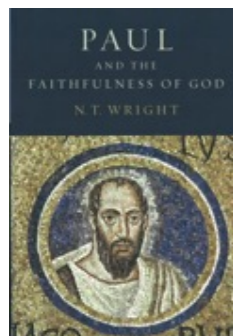
Younger generation not stepping up very well

My theory of thirds (households)

1/3 excelling

1/3 giving weakly

1/3 not giving

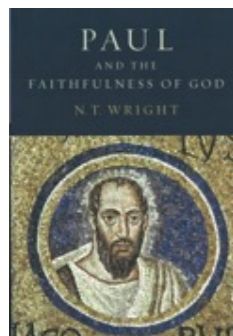


We need to excel still more

- China opportunity is opening up
- Central Iowa Antioch Initiative
- Continued support of international teams at our annual conference and summit

Report of blessing

- our own personal reports
- Michael: this week—“a whole new level”



Paul's Early Epistles

Seek the Welfare of the City

- We need a new, young, emerging benefactor team.
- As older households, we need to not “retire”—the attitude of “we have done our part” will keep us from finishing well with growing faith, not a retiring faith.
- As churches we need to become benefactor communities.

Our churches need to go through *Seek the Welfare of the City*.

