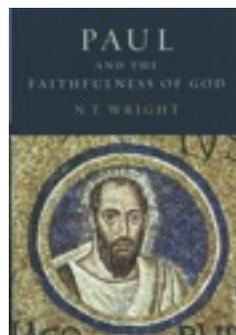


This morning we will continue our series on Paul's early letters. Paul's early letters all focused on establishing his young churches in the gospel.

Last week we finished 1 Corinthians and this morning we turn our attention to 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians is a very different type of letter since it is not primarily bringing 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?

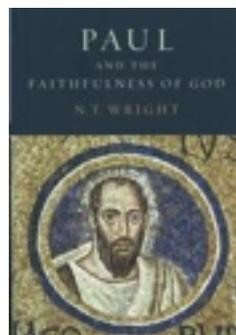


⁸You see, my dear family, we don't want to keep you in the dark about the suffering we went through in Asia. The load we had to carry was far too heavy for us; it got to the point where we gave up on life itself.

2 Corinthians 1:8 N. T. Wright

⁴No: I wrote to you in floods of tears, out of great trouble and anguish in my heart, not so that I could make you sad but so that you would know just how much overflowing love I have toward you.

2 Corinthians 2:4 N. T. Wright



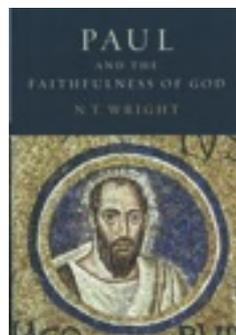
Paul's Early Epistles

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

³ So: we're starting to "recommend ourselves" again, are we? Or perhaps we need—as some do—official references to give to you? Or perhaps even to get from you?

2 Corinthians 3:3 N. T. Wright



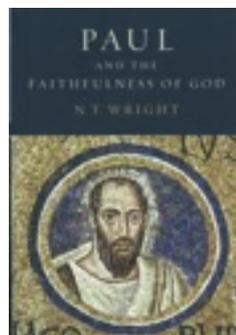
Paul's Early Epistles

⁴ Instead, we recommend ourselves as God's servants: with much patience, with sufferings, difficulties, hardships, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, going without food, ⁶ with purity, knowledge, great-heartedness, kindness, the holy spirit, genuine love, ⁷ by speaking the truth, by God's power, with weapons for God's faithful work in left and right hand alike,

2 Corinthians 6:4–7 N. T. Wright

² Make room for us! We haven't wronged anybody; we haven't ruined anybody; we haven't taken advantage of anybody.

2 Corinthians 7:2 N. T. Wright



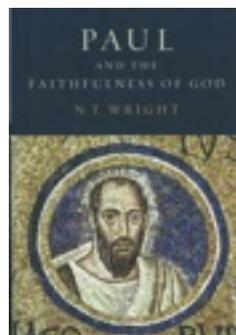
Paul's Early Epistles

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

¹¹ Just look and see what effect God's way of sadness has had among you! It's produced eagerness, explanations, indignation, fear, longing, keenness, and punishment.

2 Corinthians 7:11 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

¹ You know what I'm like: I'm humble when I'm face to face with you, but I'm bold when I'm away from you!

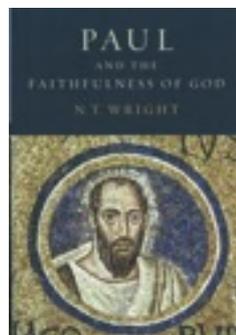
² Please, please don't put me in the position of having to be bold when I'm with you,

2 Corinthians 10:1–2 N. T. Wright

¹⁰ I know what they say: “His letters are serious and powerful, but when he arrives in person he is weak, and his words aren't worth bothering about.” ¹¹ Anyone like that should reckon on this: the way we talk in letters, when we're absent, will be how we behave when we're present.

2 Corinthians 10:10–11 N. T. Wright

Paul's Early Epistles

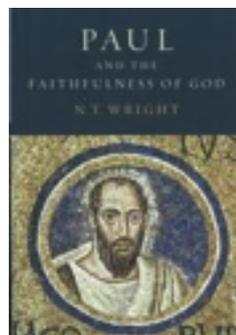


⁵ According to my calculations, you see, I am every bit as good as these super-apostles. ⁶ I may be untutored in speaking, but that certainly doesn't apply to my knowledge. Surely that's been made quite clear to you, in every way and on every point!

2 Corinthians 11:5–6 N. T. Wright

¹⁶ I'll say it again: don't let anyone think I'm a fool! But if they do—well, all right then, welcome me as a fool, so that I can do a little bit of boasting!

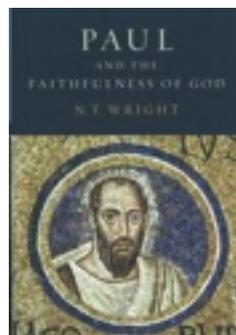
2 Corinthians 11:18 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

⁹ This is what we pray for, that you may become complete and get everything in order. ¹⁰ That's why I'm writing this to you while I'm away, so that when I come I won't have to use my authority to be severe with you. The Lord has given me this authority, after all, not to pull down but to build up.

2 Corinthians 13:9–10 N. T. Wright

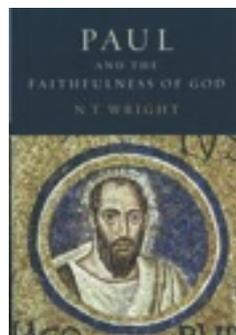


Paul's Early Epistles

Passage: 2 Corinthians

Questions:

1. Why would he devote a large letter to his relationship with the Corinthians?
2. Why would the Spirit include such a letter in the New Testament?
3. Why do you think Paul included so much personal information—his own depression, descriptions of his tireless work, defense of his credentials?
4. Why do you think he was so confrontational with the Corinthian churches?



The Early Letters

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

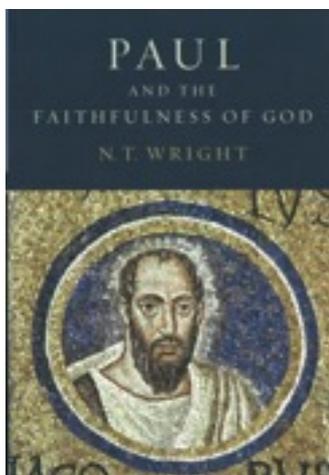
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

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



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Intent of The Early Letters

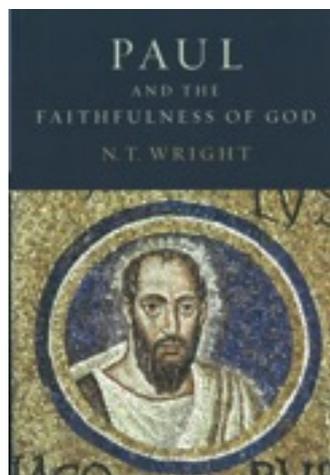
Session 2: The Galatian Problem

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

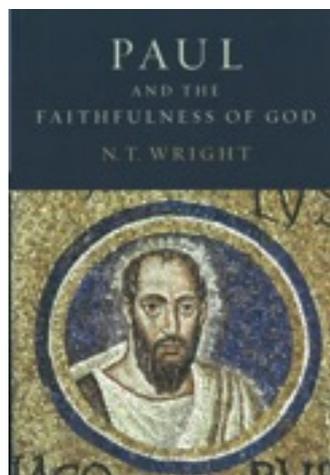
Session 2: The Pure Gospel

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

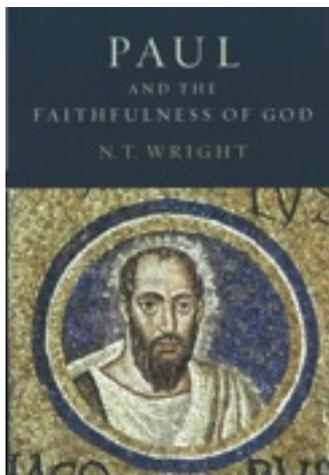
Session 2: Their Dramatic Conversion

Session 3: Three Emerging Problems—Letter 1

Session 4: Further Clarification—Letter 2

Session 5: Solidifying Their Conversion

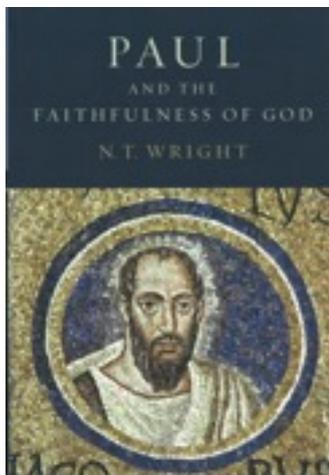
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



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

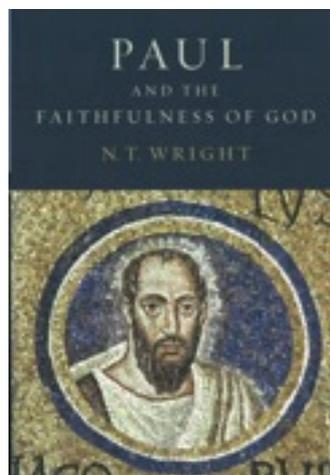
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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

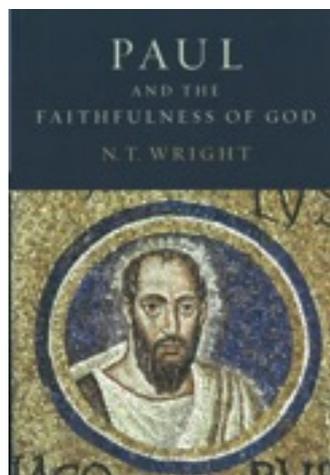


Paul's Early Epistles

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

Paul broadens the understanding of the gospel, and he 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

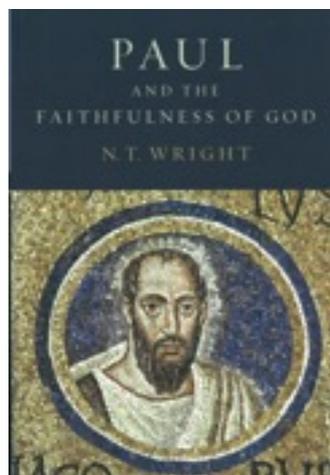
We will validate this in the six books of this series, as we look at the correspondence of these early letters:

The Galatian letter

The Thessalonian correspondence

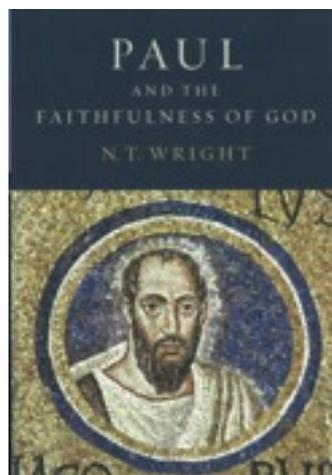
The Corinthian correspondence (2)

The letter to the Romans



Paul's Early Epistles

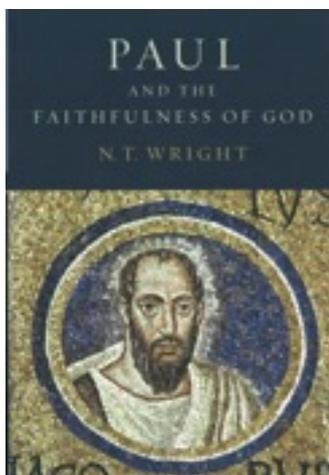
Quite a bit of background is needed to grasp the answers to the questions concerning the basic problems Paul was having with the Corinthian churches and to begin reconstructing Paul's intent in writing them.



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.

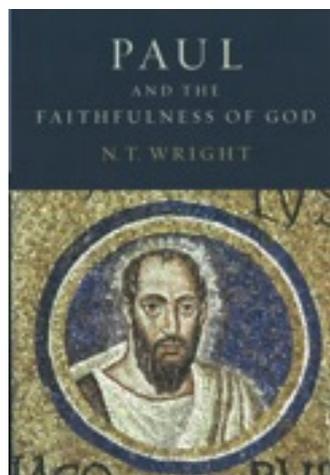


Paul's Early Epistles

The key work and author carrying the conversation is

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

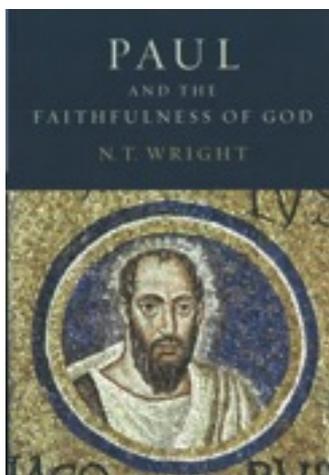
Like Malherbe's *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophical Tradition of Pastoral Care*, usually one author brings it down to the churches.



Paul's Early Epistles

This 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)

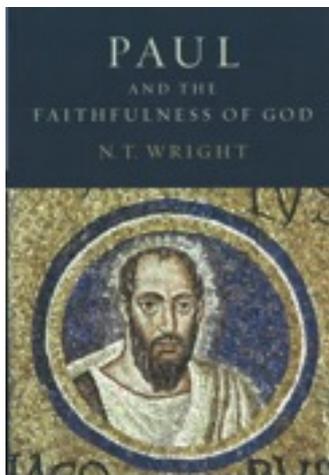


Paul's Early Epistles

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.

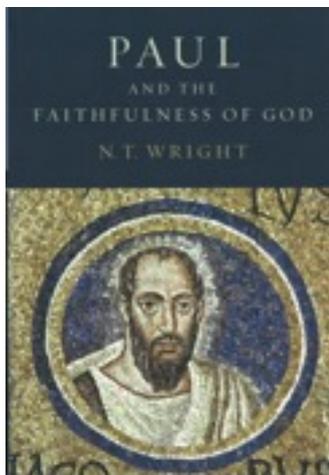


Paul's Early Epistles

The second of the two books that contribute to getting on top of the conversation:

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)

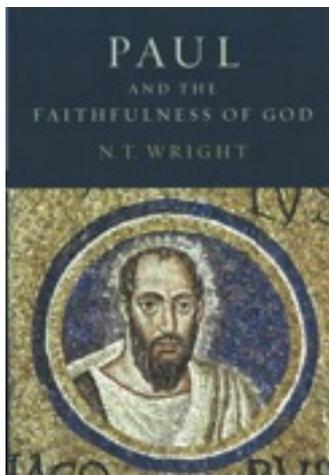
The key article is “Corinthians, the Letters of” pages 164–179.



Paul's Early Epistles

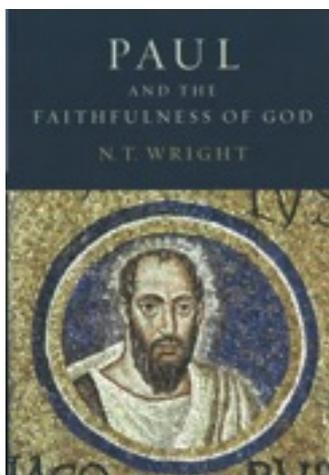
We will also use the Corinthian volumes of *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*

- *1 Corinthians* by Hans Conzelmann (Fortress, 1988)
- *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* by Hans Dieter Betz (Fortress, 1985)



As usual, we will use N. T. Wright's treatment of the gospel in the Corinthian letters in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Fortress, 2013).

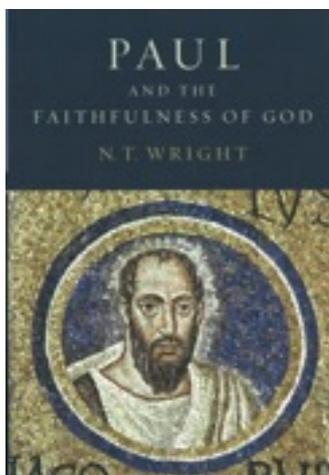
The use of Wright will be to trace the development of the gospel in the Corinthian letters. Most of his work focuses on Galatians and Romans, which is a reason he misses the focus on the quest for the historical Church, of which 1 and 2 Corinthians are so important.



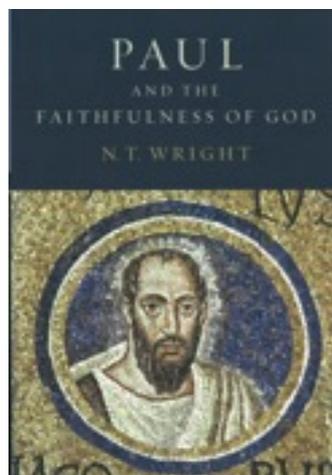
Paul's Early Epistles

Three other books will be important for sections of the Corinthian letters:

- *St. Paul's Theology of Rhetorical Style: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 in Light of First Century Greco-Roman Rhetorical Culture*, Michael A. Bullmore (ISP, 1995)
- *The Earliest History of the Christian Gatherings: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries*, Valeriy A. Alikin (Brill, 2010)
- *Worship in the Early Church*, Ralph P. Martin (Eerdman, 1974)



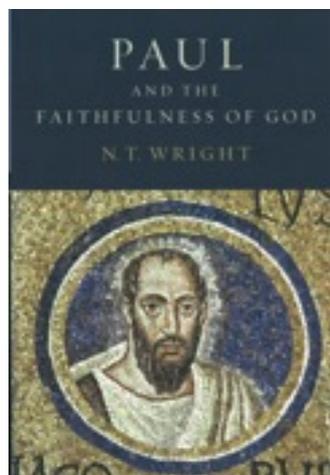
As I mentioned, quite a bit of background is needed to grasp the answers to the questions concerning Paul's basic problems with the Corinthian churches and to begin reconstructing Paul's intent in writing them.



Paul's Early Epistles

One of the first things we need to note is that these two letters were part of four letters Paul actually wrote to the Corinthian church.

We have only two of them.

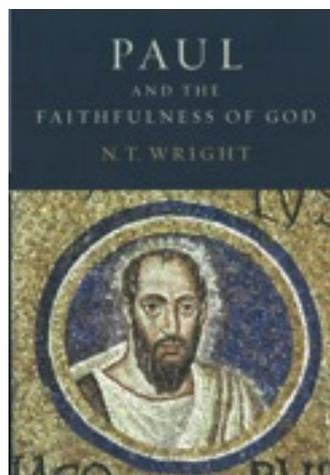


Paul's Early Epistles

Background

1 Corinthians 5:9 “I wrote to you in the previous letter...” N. T. Wright

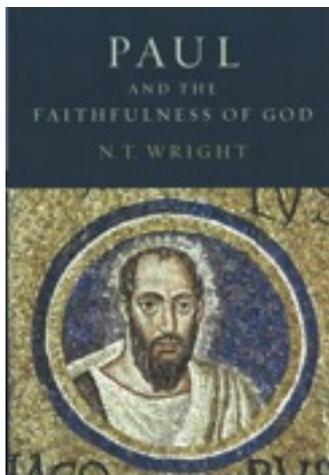
2 Corinthians 2:4 “No: I wrote to you in floods of tears, out of great trouble and anguish in my heart...” N. T. Wright



Some say the first letter was hastily written and did not sufficiently impress the Corinthians, so it was not worth retaining and copying for wider use.

“It is probably simpler, however, to deduce that this first letter was fairly brief, perhaps hastily written, and was superseded by the more extensive and more carefully expressed 1 Corinthians.”

The Making of Christianity: Beginning From Jerusalem, by James G. D. Dunn, p. 786



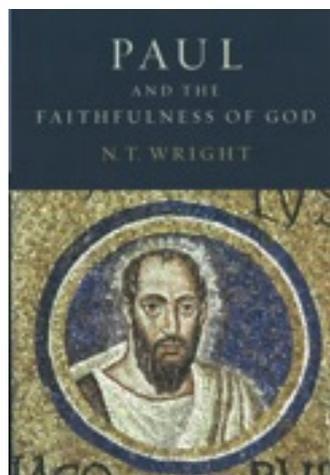
Paul's Early Epistles

Intention Statement for the Corinthian Letters

To defend his unique role of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles in the context of all sorts of rivals, keeping the Corinthian churches in his sphere of authority, as he continues to build a network of churches committed to progressing the gospel among the Gentiles

by writing his second letter to deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses, fragmenting the Corinthian churches.

by writing his fourth letter to appeal to the Corinthians to remain under his leadership despite the attacks of rival leaders on his apostleship.



Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

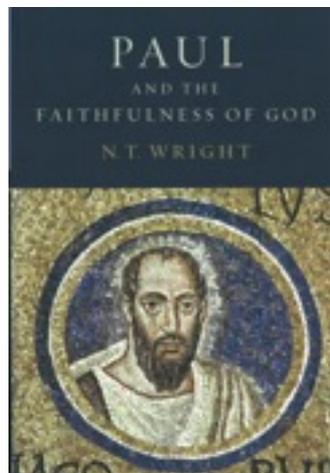
To deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches, with the view of the Corinthian churches fully participating with him in the progress of the gospel

by applying the gospel to the core divisions that developed by factions within the churches

by specifically addressing factions in both

- their community life and
- their community gatherings

by appealing to the future resurrection



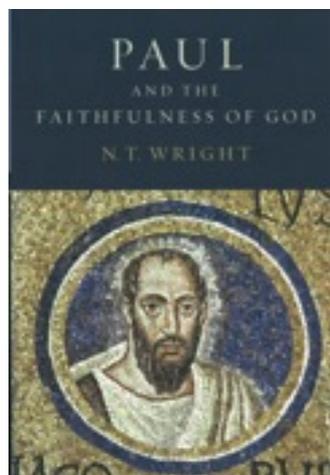
Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

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

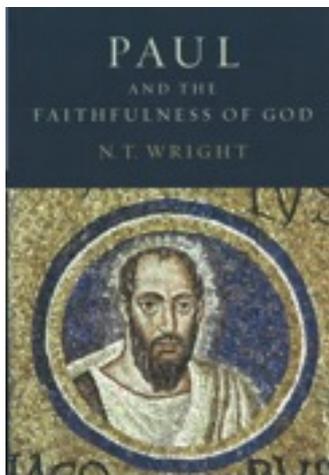
by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship

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

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



Now let's turn our attention 2 Corinthians



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

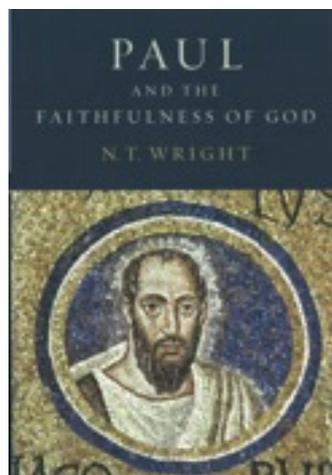
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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

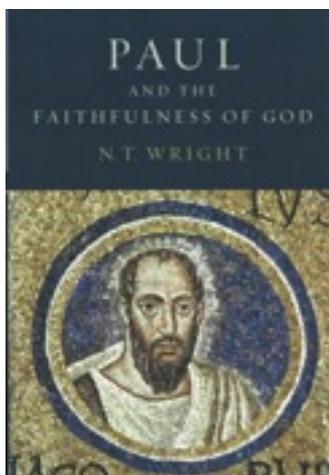


Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

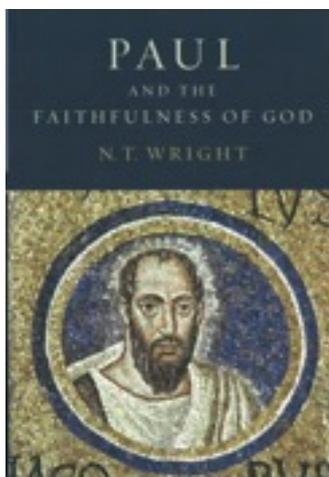
In this section, we will cover 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:11.



Paul's Early Epistles

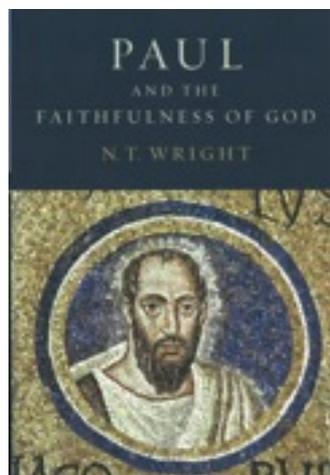
His argument is this: (1 Corinthians 1:1–2:11)

- He begins his argument by focussing on the fact that he was deeply depressed. 1:8
- He is writing plainly to them, directly in a way they can understand, and prays they will follow his reasoning all the way through the letter. 1:13–14
- He was honest in his plan to visit them, not manipulating, but he was so upset (he sent the 3rd letter that did not make the New Testament final cut) that he went on to Macedonia. 1:15–18
- Upon more reflection, he seemed to argue that it was better for him to write a carefully constructed argument with the hope that most in the churches would follow his defense. 1:23–2:4



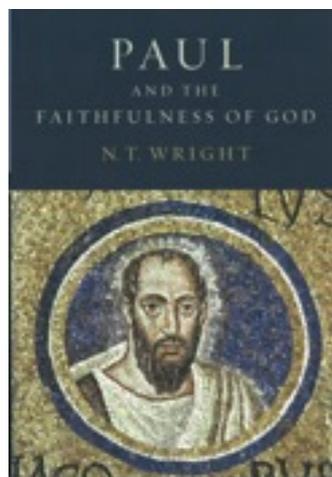
His argument is this: (1 Corinthians 1:1–2:11)

- He appeals to them to carefully follow his argument, as many have begun to do with his first letter. 1:13–14
- He finishes this section by calling those who are listening to him not to overdo the discipline (reaffirm their love for him) he asked them to carry out in the first letter, and to tell them the specific discipline he called on was a test of whether they would follow him. 2:5–11



Paul's Early Epistles

⁸ You see, my dear family, we don't want to keep you in the dark about the suffering we went through in Asia. The load we had to carry was far too heavy for us; it got to the point where we gave up on life itself. ⁹ Yes: deep inside ourselves we received the death sentence. This was to stop us relying on ourselves, and to make us rely on the God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He rescued us from such a great and deadly peril, and he'll do it again; we have placed our hope in him, that he'll do it again! ¹¹ But you must cooperate with us through prayer for us, so that when God gives us this gift, answering the prayers of so many, all the more will give thanks because of what's happened to us.

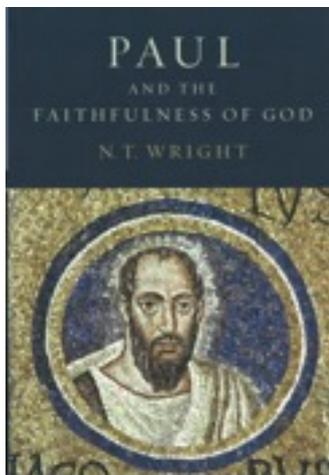


2 Corinthians 1:8–11 NT Wright

Paul's Early Epistles

¹² This is what we boast of, you see; this is what our conscience is telling us: that our conduct in the world, and in particular in relation to you, has been marked by holiness and godly sincerity, not in merely human wisdom but in God's grace. ¹³ We are not writing anything to you, after all, except what you can read and understand. And I hope you will go on understanding right through to the end, ¹⁴ just as you have understood us already— well, partly, at least! We are your pride and joy, just as you are ours, on the day of our Lord Jesus.

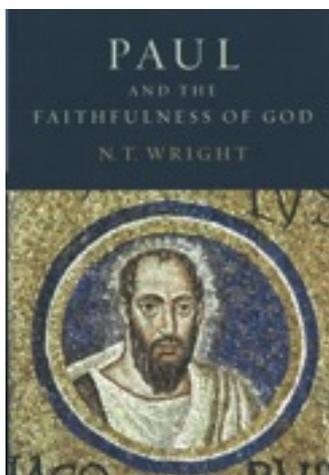
2 Corinthians 1:12–14 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

¹⁵ I was quite sure of this. That's why I wanted to come to you again, so that you could have a double blessing. ¹⁶ I intended to go on to Macedonia by way of you, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judaea. ¹⁷ Was I just fooling around when I was making plans like this? Was I concocting schemes in a merely human way, prepared to say "Yes, yes," and "No, no," at the same moment? ¹⁸ God can bear me faithful witness that our word to you was not a mixture of yes and no.

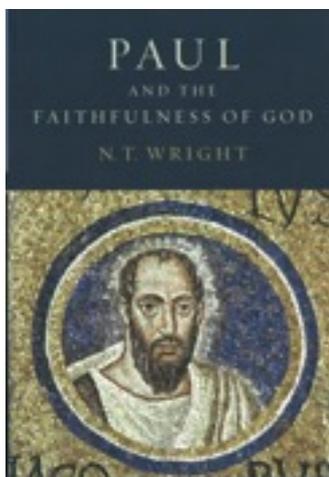
2 Corinthians 1:15–18 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

²³ For my own part, I call on God as witness, against my own life, that the reason I haven't yet come back to Corinth is because I wanted to spare you. ²⁴ This isn't because I am making myself the lord and master over your faith; your faith is the reason you stand fast! Rather, it's because we are cooperating with you for your joy.

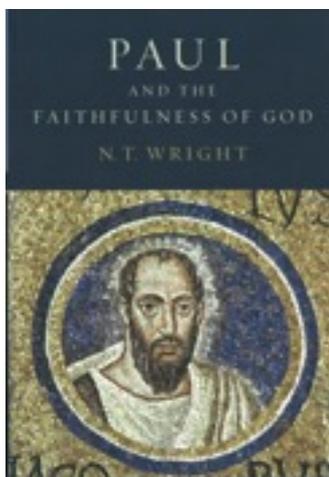
2 Corinthians 1:23–24 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

¹ You see, I settled it in my mind that I wouldn't make you another sad visit. ² After all, if I make you sad, who is there to cheer me up except the one who is sad because of me? ³ And I wrote what I did so that I wouldn't come and find sadness where I should have found joy. I have this confidence about all of you, that my joy belongs to all of you. ⁴ No: I wrote to you in floods of tears, out of great trouble and anguish in my heart, not so that I could make you sad but so that you would know just how much overflowing love I have toward you.

2 Corinthians 2:1–4 N. T. Wright

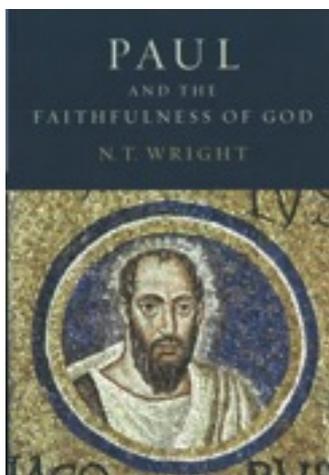


Paul's Early Epistles

So why is Paul writing this letter? Why did the Spirit include it in the N.T. canon?

Note: The whole letter is going to continue this way!!

Paul gives clues in this section, but first let's think back to the narrative of the book of Acts, which situates all these letters.

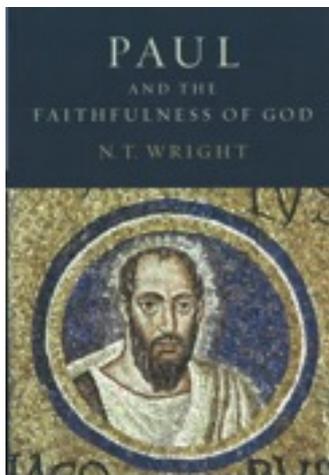


Paul's Early Epistles

The apostles are to be witnesses

1. In Jerusalem
2. In Judea and Samaria
3. To the uttermost parts

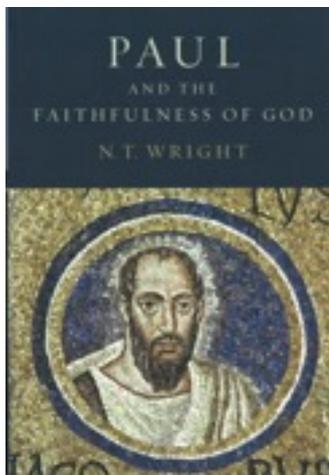
They were to go and wait for the Spirit who would bring Jesus' instructions in how to carry this out.



Paul's Early Epistles

Luke records the unfolding plan, and organizes the narrative around 6 summary statements:

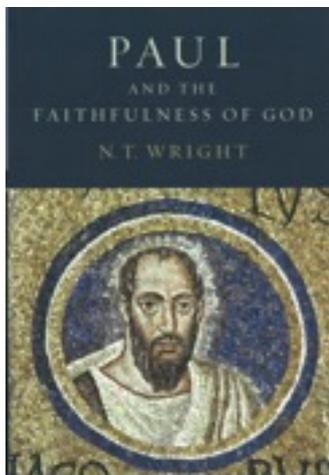
- Acts 6:7
- Acts 9:31
- Acts 12:24
- Acts 16:5
- Acts 19:20
- Acts 28:30–31



6 summary statements

6:7 The word of God increased, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem grew by leaps and bounds....

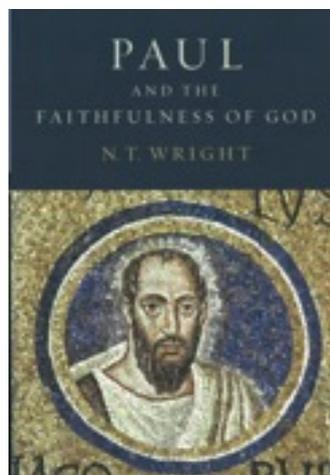
9:31 So the church in all Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria found itself at peace. It was built up and gained in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the holy spirit.... 12:24 But God's word grew and multiplied.... 16:5 The churches were strengthened in faith, and grew in number every day.... 19:20 So the word grew and was strong, in accordance with the Lord's power.



In Acts we have the unfolding of Christ's plan, and we are all part of it.

We are all to participate in the progress of the gospel, and the multiplication of churches globally is the vehicle for that progress.

Paul gives us clues that he is keeping the Corinthian churches in line with God's plan. (That will be much clearer as his argument unfolds. But look at his clues in this beginning section.)



Paul's Early Epistles

¹ Paul, an apostle of King Jesus through God's will, and Timothy our brother; to God's assembly in Corinth, with all God's people in the whole of Achaëa: ² grace and peace to you from God our father and the Lord, King Jesus!

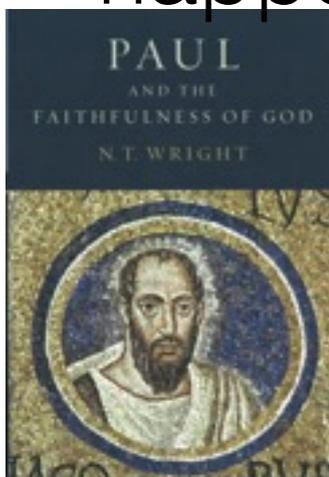
2 Corinthians 1:1–2 N. T. Wright

⁸ You see, my dear family, we don't want to keep you in the dark about the suffering we went through in Asia.

2 Corinthians 1:8 N. T. Wright

¹¹ But you must cooperate with us through prayer for us, so that when God gives us this gift, answering the prayers of so many, all the more will give thanks because of what's happened to us.

2 Corinthians 1:11 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

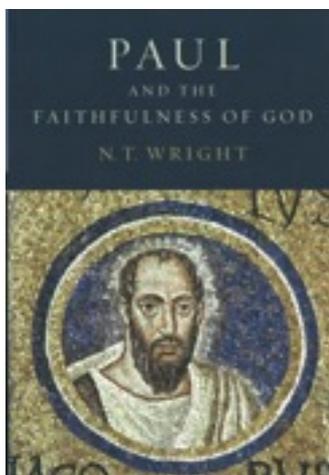
He will unfold this as we go along in very clear ways

⁸ Let me tell you, my dear family, about the grace which God has given to the Macedonian churches.

2 Corinthians 8:1 N. T. Wright

¹⁵ This is what we hope for: that, as your faith increases, we will be given a much larger space for work, according to our rule, ¹⁶ which is to announce the gospel in the lands beyond you, not to boast in what has already been accomplished through the rule someone else has been given.

2 Corinthians 10:15–16 N. T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

Now back to where we started.

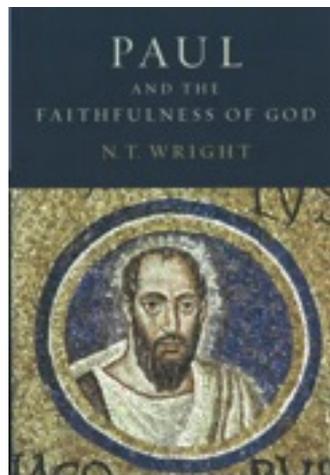
Why would Paul write a letter like this? Why would the Spirit put this intense correspondence in the New Testament?

Churches are not about themselves.

Not just good places to get personal encouragement.

Not just a good way to raise a good family.

As this letter unfolds, we will get a very good picture of this.

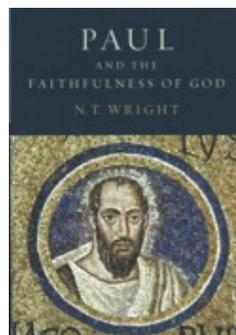


Paul's Early Epistles

Issue: Apostolic leadership in action

Questions:

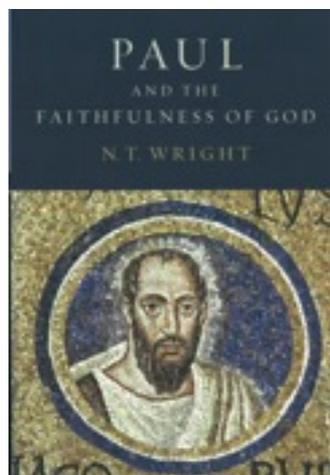
1. How does Paul's leadership style compare with our expectation of leadership in our churches today?
2. Why are we devoid of this kind of leadership in and amongst our churches today?
3. Is depression, anxiety, and pressure a normative part of apostolic leadership?
4. Is Paul's example of intense, direct speech also a normal thing for top leadership in churches?



Our entire philosophy of ministry will be shaped in our thinking as this letter unfolds.

Philosophy of ministry

- what it takes to establish churches in the gospel
- what kind of battles to expect
- the personal commitment of leaders, an expected toll on leaders
- how to think about what success really is
- how can we know if a church is established in the gospel
- how leaders bring about change in churches
- what does it mean for leaders to exercise authority in and amongst churches

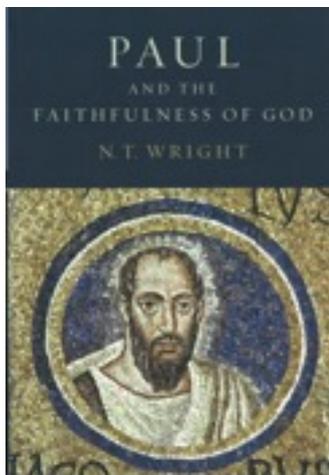


Paul's Early Epistles

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

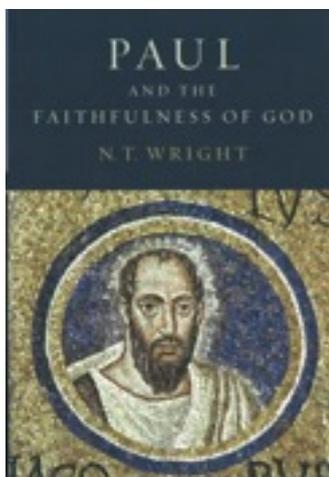


Paul's Early Epistles

As the gospel is spreading rapidly all across the Global South, networks appear everywhere as a standard development. We actually work with over 100 networks, some of them huge.

They need to develop a sodal–modal combination, which includes apostolic teams and local elders shepherding the churches under those teams. The teams need to establish their authority by providing strategic expansion vision and solid apostolic teaching, and the appointment of elders as official authority in the churches.

Western denominations need to renew/repurpose themselves as networks/movements in the same fashion.



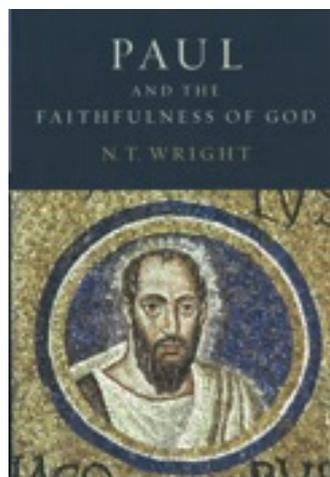
Paul's Early Epistles

Are you established in the gospel?

It is far more than just embracing the gospel message, but includes the entire apostolic teaching and participating fully in the progress of that gospel under the vision and teaching of apostolic leadership and the shepherding of local, recognized leaders.

Is your church established in the gospel?

It is far more than just embracing the gospel and teaching, but includes participating in the progress of the gospel in partnership with and with the authority of apostolic leadership.



Paul's Early Epistles