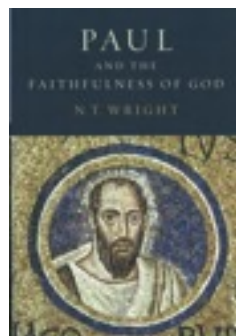


This morning we continue our series on Paul's early letters. Paul's early letters all focused on establishing his young churches in the gospel.

We finished 1 Corinthians, and today we will finish 2 Corinthians.

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

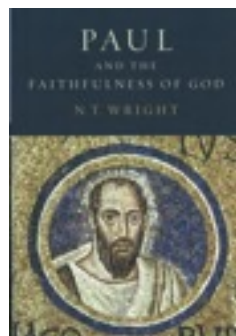
Why would he devote a large letter to his relationship with the Corinthians? We will continue addressing this issue this morning.



This morning we will focus on what Paul was really after, in writing these two letters to the Corinthian churches.

Paul begins his last chapter by threatening a 3rd trip to them at which he would use his authority to remove several people from the churches.

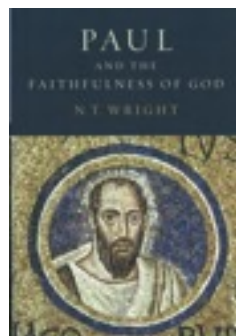
Why was Paul so strong, going on and on with his confrontations and even threats to these churches? Why did he have to be so severe?



Passage: 2 Corinthians 13:1–14

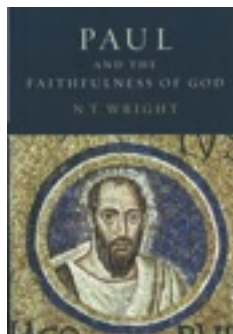
Questions:

1. Why was Paul so harsh at the beginning of this final chapter of his second letter? What was he threatening to do?
2. What was Paul really after with these Corinthian churches? What exactly was he after?
3. In what sense are his six exhortations in 13:11–12 a summary of everything he was writing in his two letters?
4. Why were the Corinthians so important to Paul as he was building his network of churches?



13:1 This is the third time I'm coming to you. "Every charge must be substantiated at the mouth of two or three witnesses." ²I said it before when I was with you the second time, and I say it now in advance while I'm away from you, to all those who had sinned previously, and all the others, that when I come back again I won't spare them— ³since you are looking for proof of the Messiah who speaks in me, the Messiah who is not weak toward you but powerful in your midst! ⁴He was crucified in weakness, you see, but he lives by God's power. For we too are weak in him, but we shall live with him, for your benefit, by God's power.

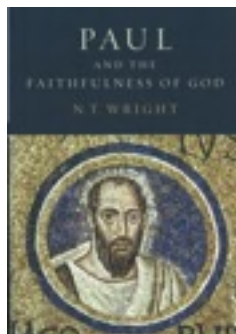
2 Corinthians 13:1–4 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

¹¹All that remains, my dear family, is this: celebrate, put everything in order, strengthen one another, think in the same way, be at peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with the holy kiss. All God's people send you their greetings. ¹³The grace of King Jesus the Lord, the love of God, and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:11–13 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

The Early Letters

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

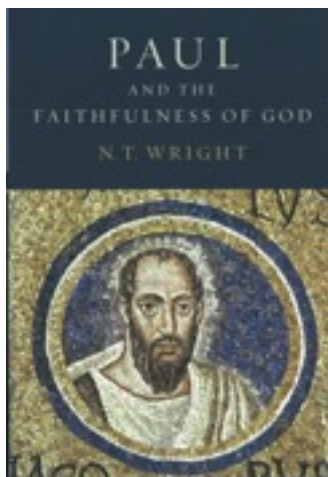
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

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

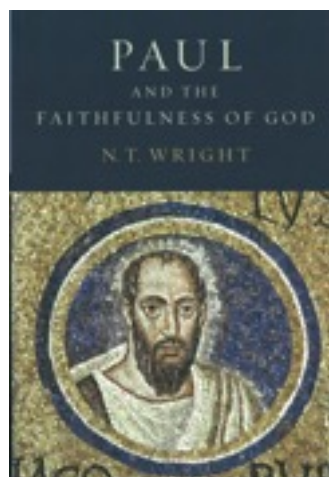


Paul's Early Epistles

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

Paul broadens the understanding of the gospel, rooting 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

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

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

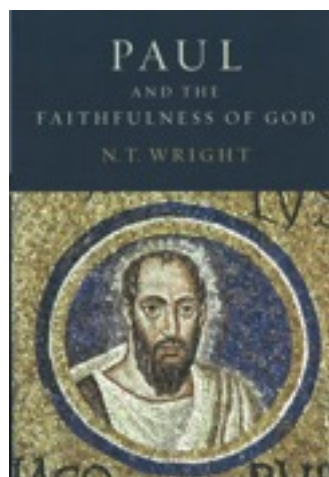
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Leadership

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

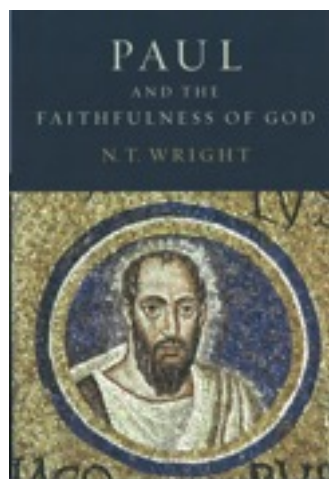
Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

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.

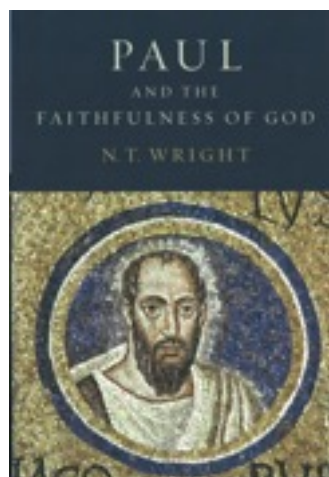
by describing the heart of the ministry of the gospel, “conflicts without and fears within,” as a context for victorious progress.

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



Last week we looked at 2 Corinthians 10–12 in one sweeping look at the importance of apostolic leadership.

We will review the main points quickly since chapter thirteen builds on that directly.



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

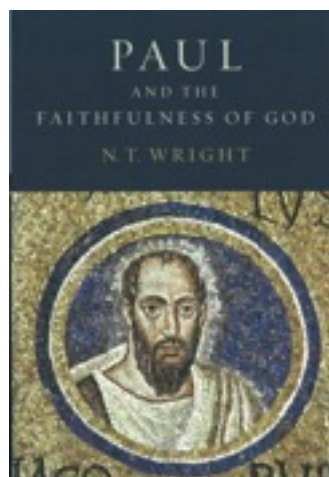
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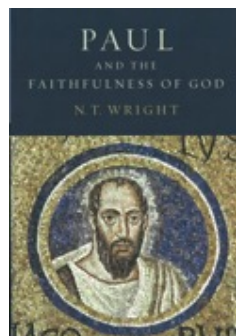
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

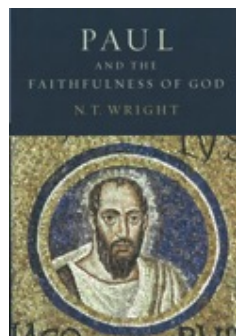
Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Role and Responsibility

1. Paul's authority rested in the authoritative word given to him from Christ (embodied in his letters) and his gifted ability to hold the teaching against any human arguments made against it.
2. He was humble in his general teaching, but exercised the authority needed to hold the churches to that body of teaching, challenging any arguments brought against it, knowing the word of Christ carried supernatural power.
3. Though he was weak, his weapons (his letters and his arguments of defense) carried enormous spiritual power, which he would teach boldly and confrontationally (even face to face) as needed.



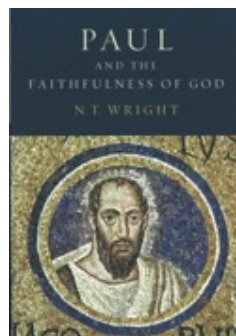
Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Role and Responsibility

4. Paul's authority was not a formal authority based on rank, in which one has higher rank than another and boasts they are more important because of position.
5. Paul's boasting was in stewarding *the field* God had given him, and as the churches' faith grew, he sought to enlarge that sphere by seeking to proclaim the gospel in other lands.



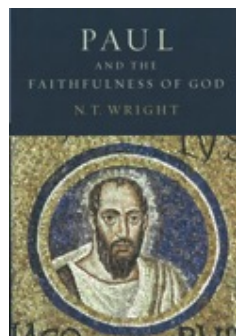
Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Role and Responsibility

6. Paul had the view that he needed to get the churches established in Christ's teaching so he could turn them over to Christ and they could continue to mature in Christ and impact their area, but he was afraid their minds were being corrupted—not one minded, embracing a different gospel.
7. Paul was untutored in speaking (not a skilled or trained orator from the professional class), but was very skilled in his knowledge; his arguments were superior at every point.
8. Paul worked hard to cut off the churches from so-called apostles (orators of light) who did not follow the teaching he was delivering.



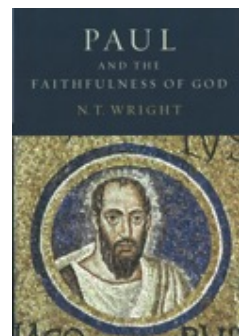
Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Role and Responsibility

9. Paul defends his authenticity as an Apostle by reminding them he worked harder than anyone, under great opposition; traveled constantly; and burned the candle at both ends.
10. He adds to that the daily pressure on him of caring for the churches as part of his authenticity.



Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Role and Responsibility

11. Paul continues his defense by describing the special experience he was given to see parts of the heavenly places behind Christ's building of his Church, along with the thorn in the flesh (probably some kind of recurring illness) he was given, a weakness the false apostles were exploiting.
12. Paul's commendation includes their very existence as churches. He is not invalidated by super-apostles undermining his weakness or claiming he is a huckster just seeking money; he noted that Titus, one of his team members, exhibited the same traits as he did.
13. Paul's intense letters and his powerful arguments, always causing conflicts, were because he was afraid they would still be torn apart by divisions and disorder.



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

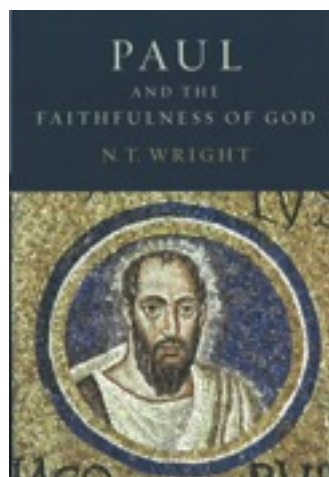
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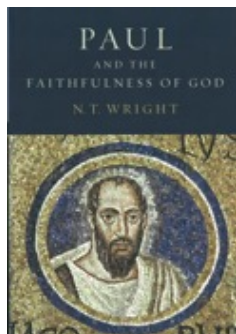
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

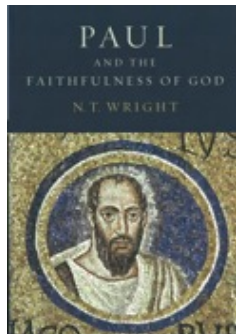
13:1 This is the third time I'm coming to you. "Every charge must be substantiated at the mouth of two or three witnesses." ²I said it before when I was with you the second time, and I say it now in advance while I'm away from you, to all those who had sinned previously, and all the others, that when I come back again I won't spare them— ³since you are looking for proof of the Messiah who speaks in me, the Messiah who is not weak toward you but powerful in your midst! ⁴He was crucified in weakness, you see, but he lives by God's power. For we too are weak in him, but we shall live with him, for your benefit, by God's power.

2 Corinthians 13:1–4 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

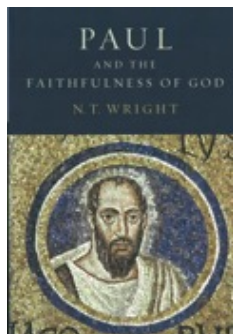
⁵Test yourselves to see if you really are in the faith! Put yourselves through the examination. Or don't you realize that Jesus the Messiah is in you?— unless, that is, you've failed the test. ⁶I hope you will discover that we didn't fail the test. ⁷But we pray to God that you will never, ever do anything wrong; not so that we can be shown up as having passed the test, but so that you will do what is right, even if that means that we appear like people who've failed. ⁸For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹We celebrate, you see, when we are weak but you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become complete and get everything in order. ¹⁰That'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 13:5–10 (N. T. Wright)
Paul's Early Epistles

¹¹All that remains, my dear family, is this: celebrate, put everything in order, strengthen one another, think in the same way, be at peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with the holy kiss. All God's people send you their greetings. ¹³The grace of King Jesus the Lord, the love of God, and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all.

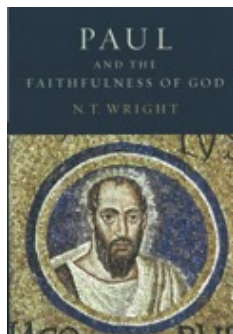
2 Corinthians 13:11–13 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

Why does Paul end this way? What exactly is he saying? Why is he so harsh? What does he see is at stake?

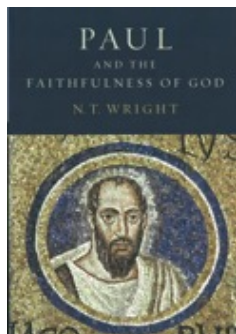
Lets look at each paragraph carefully.



Paul's Early Epistles

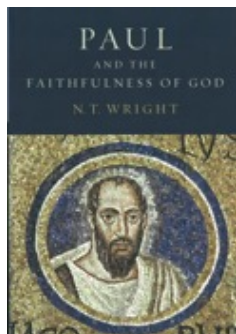
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Paul's Early Epistles

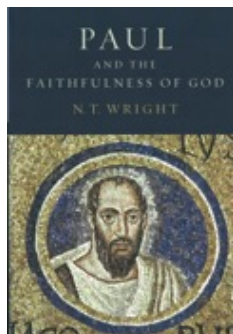
⁵Test yourselves to see if you really are in the faith! Put yourselves through the examination. Or don't you realize that Jesus the Messiah is in you?— unless, that is, you've failed the test. ⁶I hope you will discover that we didn't fail the test. ⁷But we pray to God that you will never, ever do anything wrong; not so that we can be shown up as having passed the test, but so that you will do what is right, even if that means that we appear like people who've failed. ⁸For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹We celebrate, you see, when we are weak but you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become complete and get everything in order. ¹⁰That'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 13:5–10 (N. T. Wright)
Paul's Early Epistles

What do we know?

- He is coming a third time.
- The issue is whether they are in the faith Paul delivered to them.
- They are to test themselves to see if they are in the faith or not—are they holding to the gospel he preached to them and the teaching he told them to conform to.
- He will deal powerfully with those who fail the test, using his authority to confront.
- Even if he appears to be a failure by having so many conflicts and fears within, if they are built up and becoming strong churches, it is worth it.
- He will only use his authority to remove those from the churches for the sake of building a strong, established church.



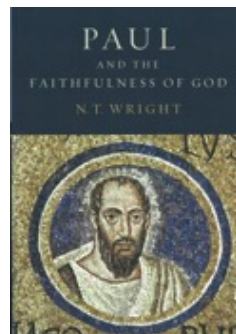
How do you think Paul was planning to deal “once and for all” with those opposing his gospel and teaching amongst the Corinthian churches?

There were probably three phases:

Phase 1: Paul would find out who they were in the churches and confront them.

Phase 2: Paul would convince the leaders (elders, deacons, and leading women) to back up his confrontation.

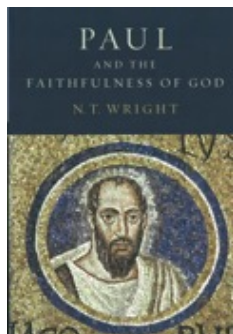
Phase 3: Paul would address the churches as a whole to completely reject them, in essence throw them out of their churches.



Keep in mind, Paul is not talking about new believers coming into the churches or maturing believers still getting established

but about those in the churches challenging them to reject Paul and to listen to them, or saying, “who is Paul?” and we do not need to listen to him.

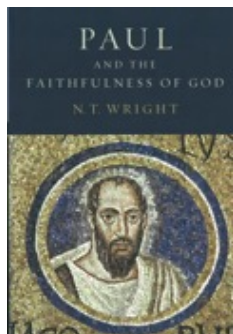
Now Paul changes his tone and addresses those he knows are following him, and he explains what he really expects from them as a response.



Paul's Early Epistles

¹¹All that remains, my dear family, is this: celebrate, put everything in order, strengthen one another, think in the same way, be at peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with the holy kiss. All God's people send you their greetings. ¹³The grace of King Jesus the Lord, the love of God, and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:11–13 (N. T. Wright)

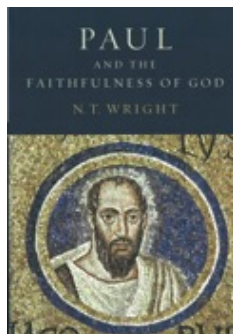


Paul's Early Epistles

This is his summary of what he expects of them:

- celebrate
- put everything in order
- strengthen one another
- think in the same way
- be at peace
- greet one another with a holy kiss

Let's look at each of these 6 final directives.

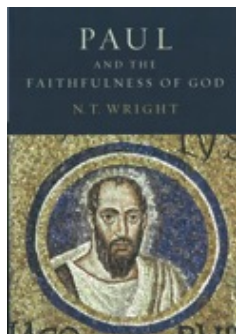


First *celebrate*

In the Pauline corpus: Joy is the actualization of freedom, which takes concrete form in fellowship, R. 12:15. The dialectic is worked out most sharply in 1 C. 7:30. Those who rejoice should be ὡς μὴ χαίροντες. Joy is an essential factor in the relation between apostle and community. Paul asks the Roman church to pray that he might come with joy. TDNT

As a phenomenon or feeling, “joy” is a culmination of being that raises no problems as such and that strains beyond itself. Little Kittle

He seems to be saying enjoy genuine fellowship with your believing family, epitomized in celebrating the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17–34).



Paul's Early Epistles

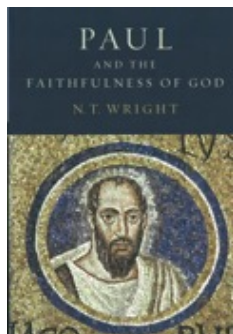
Put everything in order

This is a concept Paul has been developing in both letters to the Corinthians.

to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something—‘to make adequate, to furnish completely, to cause to be fully qualified, adequacy.’ LN

“right,” “faultless,” “normal,” “meeting demands” posed TDNT

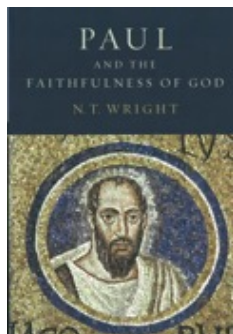
At 1 Th. 3:10, with reference to the πίστις of the Thessalonians, it means b. “to establish,” “to confirm,” especially in terms of Christian character worked out in the sense of unity of the members of the community (1 C. 1:10). TDNT



Put everything in order

Along the same lines καταρτισμός is used at Eph. 4:12, in the context of the edifying of the body of Christ, to denote the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry. The establishment of the community in work for the kingdom of God in the widest sense thus constitutes for Paul a material precondition of the upbuilding and consequently the actualization of the community. TDNT

Paul has the whole of 1 Corinthians in mind by choosing this word again.

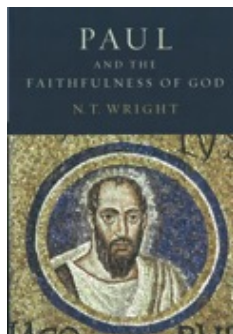


Put everything in order

He wants the Corinthian churches to become fully established:

- the churches embracing the gospel and the body of teaching Paul delivered to all the churches (kerygma and didache)
- each believer being aligned with the gospel and teaching, becoming equipped for ministry
- all those not following Paul's gospel and teaching being dealt with and removed if necessary

“but all things should be done decently and in order”
1 Corinthians 14:40

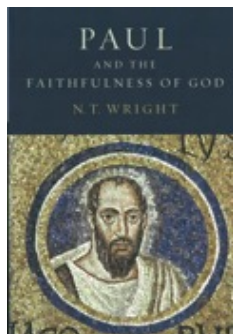


Strengthen one another

3. A third sense is that of “exhorting” or “encouraging,” and even on occasion of “winning over” for a plan.

Little Kittle

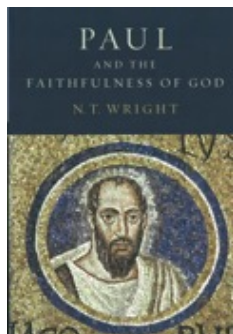
In this context, I think it means coming alongside, encouraging and winning over any believers who might be shaken by all the conflict and opposition.



Think the same way

(3) as having an attitude or frame of mind think in such a way, purpose, be inclined ANLEX

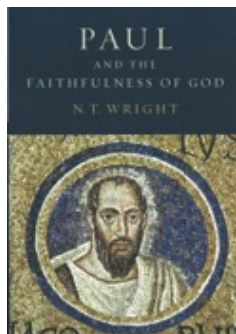
3. Paul uses this word with striking frequency and usually expresses with it single-minded commitment to something and the conditions for such commitment. (Neutral use occurs only in 1 Cor 13:11, where φρονέω stands in a series with λαλέω and λογίζομαι.) EDNT



Think the same way

Paul delivered a pure gospel to them and a teaching that all the churches received, including making clear that Christ's plan, that the churches were central to the progress of the gospel, was to be followed by all.

They needed to reflect on it, understand it, and be one minded around it.



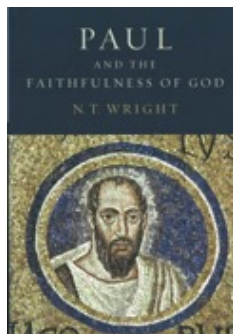
Paul's Early Epistles

Be at peace

to live in peace with others—‘to behave peacefully, to live in peace.’ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις ‘live in peace with one another’ Mk 9:50. In some languages the equivalent of ‘live in peace’ is a negation of fighting, for example, ‘do not fight’ or ‘do not constantly quarrel.’ LN

Paul is referring back to the quarreling and conflicts of 1 Corinthians—factors of following different leaders, suits against each other, conflicts at the Lord’s supper, etc.

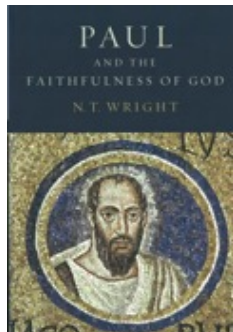
In addition, all personal conflicts needed to be resolved.



Greet everyone with a holy kiss

Paul uses this symbol as a way of saying greet every one as family. In one way, this summarizes all of the above 5 directives.

This is a very important symbol because the churches really are Christ's family and the social structure of the church is a family of families.



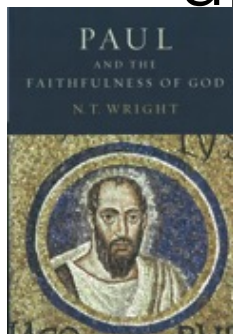
So when all is said and done, after two long letters, what does Paul expect from the Corinthian churches?

1. Celebrate your new life in Christ's family, enjoying life together, especially at your weekly gathering as churches.
2. Carefully order your churches around the gospel I brought you and the body of teaching I delivered to all the churches.
3. Come alongside, encouraging and winning over any believers who might be shaken by all the conflict and opposition.
4. Work hard to be of the same frame of mind, developed from the gospel and teaching Paul delivered to the churches.
5. Live in peace with one another, resolving existing conflicts, suits, clicks, class differences, etc.
6. Accept and embrace one another as family, because Christ's churches are His family, and the social structure of the church is a family of families.

This is a great summary of what Paul was trying to accomplish with his churches.

But it could not be achieved, or enjoyed, without dealing with those who refused to follow the said gospel, the teaching of Paul to the churches, and to be willing to change their lifestyle as well.

Paul knew none of these ideals would be achieved without the level of discipline needed in the churches. He was founding a movement, and strategic churches had to be founded correctly or everything would fail. With these churches, he eventually built a movement that turned the Roman Empire upside down.

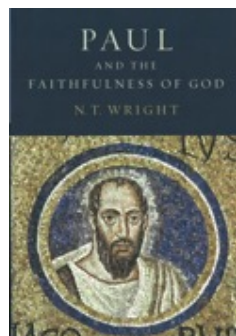


Paul's Early Epistles

Issue: The difficulty of establishing strategic churches

Questions:

1. What does Paul's example teach us about the difficulty of establishing strategic churches today?
2. What role does discipline have in establishing churches? How is it exercised?
3. What does 2 Corinthians 13:11–14 teach us about what an established church looks like?
4. Why do we need strong apostolic leaders moving amongst our church moments worldwide today?

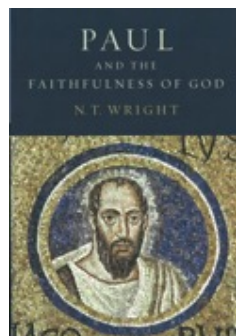


Paul's Early Epistles

Role and Responsibility of Apostolic Leaders Today

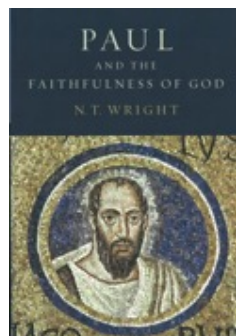
1. The authority of apostolic leaders rests in the authoritative word given to the churches from Christ (embodied in the apostolic writings) and their gifted ability to hold the teaching against any human arguments made against it.
2. Apostolic leaders might be humble in their general teaching, but they exercise the authority needed to hold their churches to that body of teaching, challenging any arguments brought against it, knowing the word of Christ carries supernatural power.
3. Though apostolic leaders often appear insignificant, their weapons (Paul's letters and his arguments of defense) carry enormous spiritual power, which they teach boldly and confrontationally, even face to face as needed.

Paul's Early Epistles



Role and Responsibility of Apostolic Leaders Today

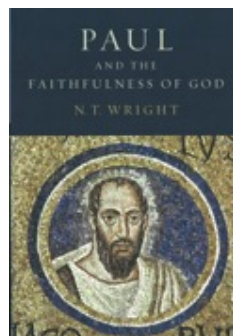
4. Apostolic leadership's authority is not a formal authority based on rank, in which one has higher rank than another and boasts they are more important because of position.
5. Apostolic leadership's boasting is in stewarding the field God has given them, and as the churches' faith grows, apostolic leaders seek to enlarge that sphere by proclaiming the gospel in other lands.



Role and Responsibility of Apostolic Leaders Today

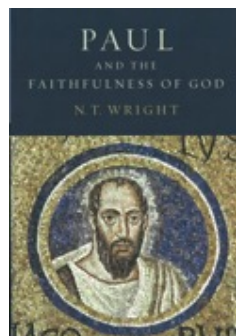
6. Apostolic leaders hold the view that they need to get the churches established in Christ's teaching so they can turn them over to Christ and the churches will continue to mature in Christ and impact their area (spontaneous expansion), but they often cannot because churches are being corrupted by other teachings, therefore not one minded, but embracing a different gospel and teaching.
7. Apostolic leaders are often not from the professional class or the most skilled speakers, but they are very skilled in their knowledge; their arguments are superior at every point.
8. Apostolic leaders are willing to cut off the churches under their influence from so-called apostles (orators of light) who do not follow the teaching Paul delivered to the early churches.

Paul's Early Epistles



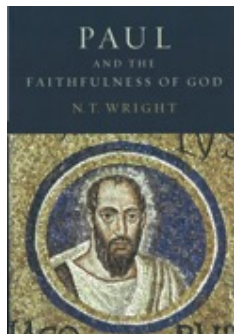
Role and Responsibility of Apostolic Leaders Today

9. Their authenticity as apostolic leaders is seen in that they work harder than anyone, often under great opposition; travel constantly; and burn the candle at both ends, with little or no personal reward.
10. They can be seen carrying the daily pressure on themselves of caring for the churches under their sphere of influence.



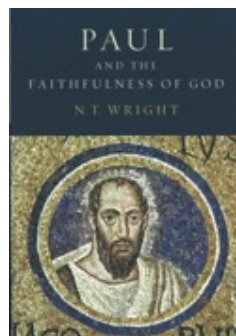
Role and Responsibility of Apostolic Leaders Today

11. They often describe special experiences that shaped their calling, along with weaknesses that professionals in formal positions exploit.
12. Their primary qualification as apostolic leaders is the church networks under their influence. That is not invalidated by others with official positions and “professional training” or those with significant resources (“the majority” in paradigm terms). They possess an apostolic team who exhibit the same passions and abilities.
13. They are known for powerful arguments, based on Paul’s intense letters, that often cause conflicts out of their concern to see churches established in the apostolic teaching—disrupters.

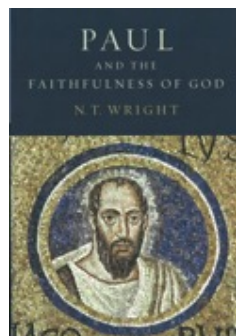


In 2 Corinthians 13 we see one final role of key apostolic leaders today:

13. The key apostolic leader must be willing to escalate the confrontation to remove those from churches who are opposing the gospel and teaching Paul delivered to the churches—the kerygma and didache.



So when all is said and done, what do the two letters teach us about stabilizing churches in the gospel and the teaching delivered by Paul to the early churches?



Paul's Early Epistles

After two long letters, what should apostolic leaders expect of their churches today?

1. Celebrate their new life in Christ's family, enjoying life together, especially at your weekly gathering as churches.
2. Carefully order their churches around the the gospel and the body of teaching Paul delivered to all the churches.
3. Leaders and members of the churches must come alongside, encouraging and winning over any believers who might be shaken by all the conflict and opposition.
4. They must all work hard to be of the same frame of mind, developed from the gospel and teaching Paul delivered to the churches.
5. They should live in peace with one another, resolving existing conflicts, suits, clicks, class differences, etc.
6. They would accept and embrace one another as family, because Christ's churches are His family, and the social structure of the church is a family of families.

This is not an easy task.

It is filled with conflicts without and fears within.

But it is the ministry—in the 21st century as well as the 1st century.

And, it is a very serious task demanded of well trained leaders!

