

The Roman Treatise

Issue: Fully established in the gospel

Questions:

1. What was Paul's intent in writing this letter to the Roman churches? What does it mean for the Romans to be "fully established in the gospel"?
2. How could he call the gospel "his gospel"? How did he receive this full understanding of the gospel? What did he have to rethink those three years in Arabia and Damascus?
3. How does his argument unfold in Romans 1:16–15:13? What are the main points included in this full understanding of the gospel?
4. Why was Paul so passionate to see the Romans get this full understanding? What was on the line in his ministry strategy? in his network-wide strategy?

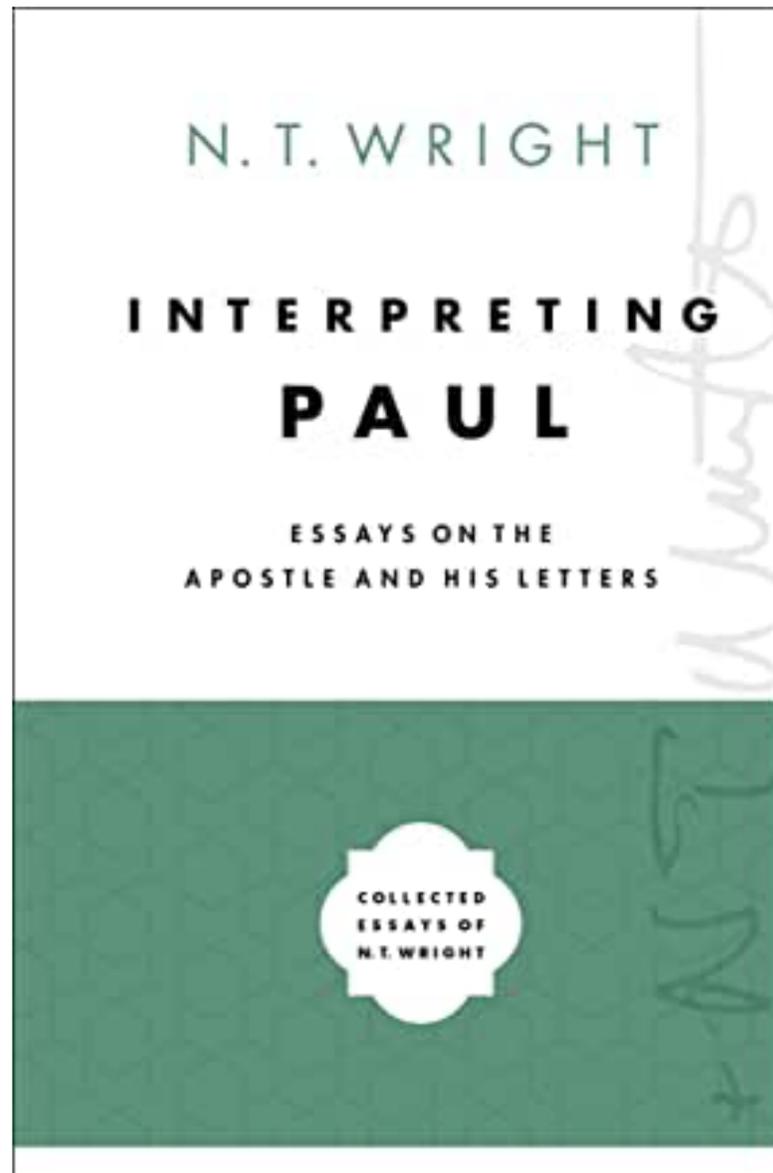
The Roman Treatise

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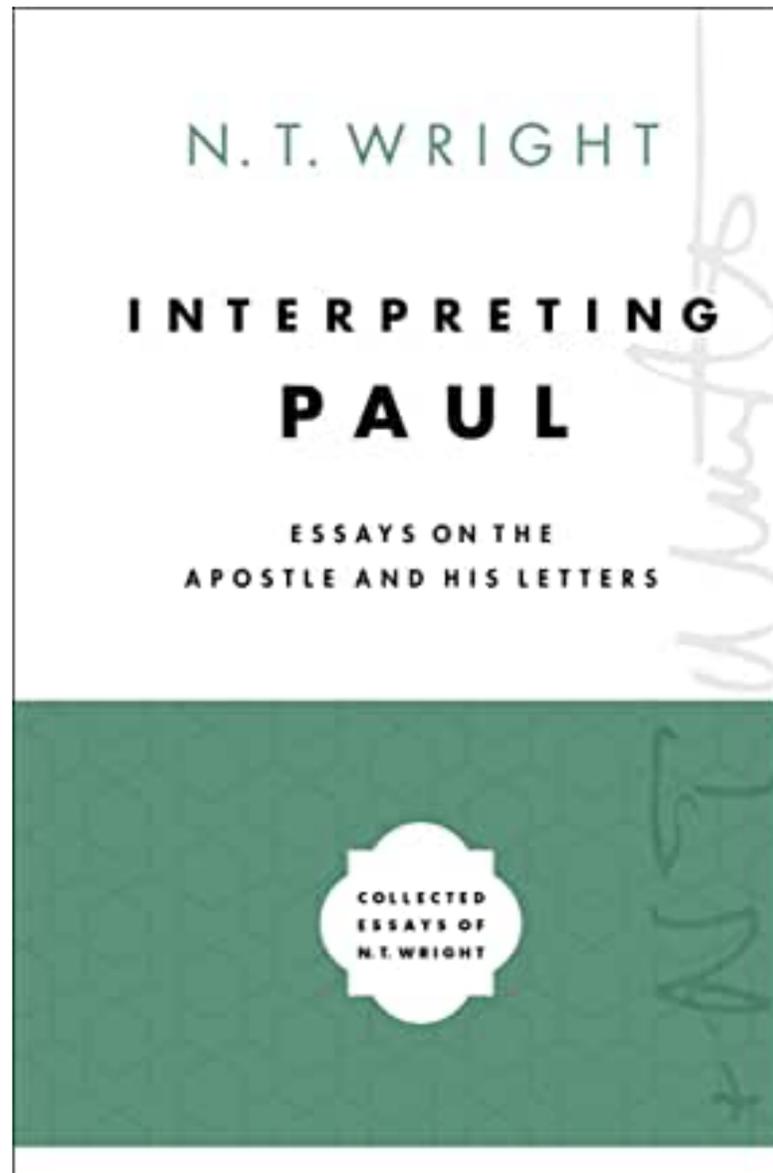
1. What does it mean to be fully established in the gospel?
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3. How does your worldview fundamentally change if you fully grasp the gospel as presented by Paul in Romans?
4. In what way is the gospel fundamental to the unity of churches—to being of one mind?

Interpreting Paul



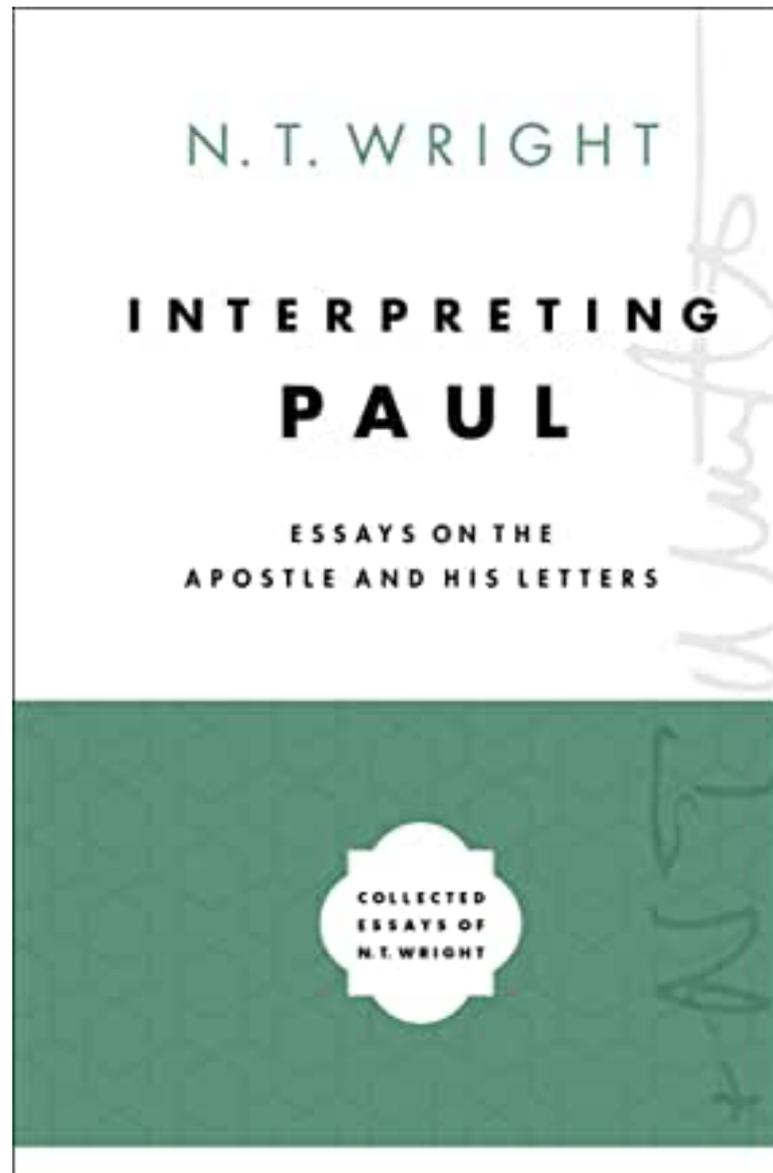
But the point was not simply that these topics needed to be worked out—as though a couple of generations might do the hard work, write the books, and leave all **subsequent generations to put their feet up** and look the answers up when they needed them. No: this theological task is, for Paul, **the ongoing task to which the whole community, and every member of it,** must be devoted.

Interpreting Paul



Here is **the genius of Paul's vision**: As he says in Colossians, to warn everyone and teach everyone in all wisdom, in order to present everyone mature in the Messiah. Or, in 1 Corinthians: be babies when it comes to evil, but in your thinking be grown-ups. Or, in Romans: do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. For Paul, theology was the task of the whole church, each one contributing his or her particular gifts. It was constantly rooted and grounded in worship and prayer, and we can see that going on in Paul's letters themselves, as some of his greatest theological formulations look very much like prayers and hymns.

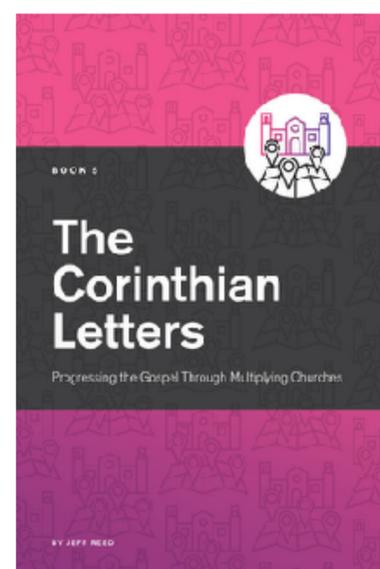
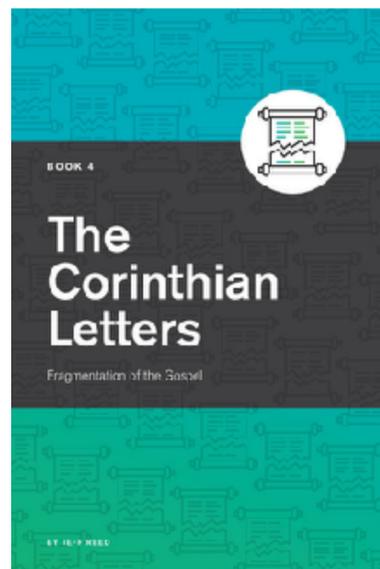
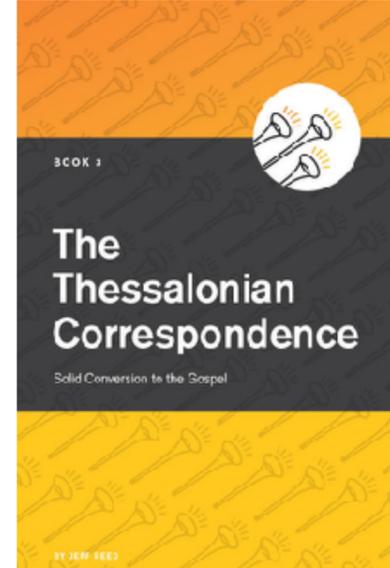
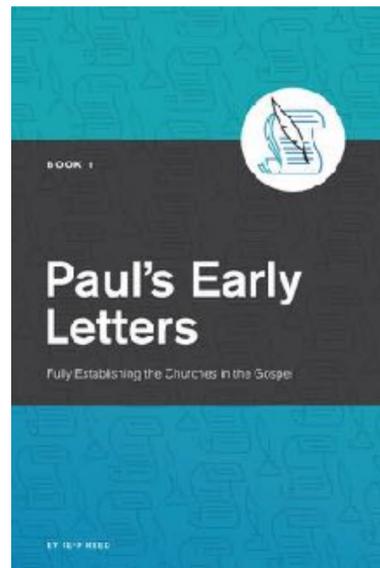
Interpreting Paul



Each community, then, and each generation, has to engage in the same exercise, the same discipline, the same activity; because this activity, this theologizing, is what will enable the central symbol to stand firm. It's hard enough trying to get a Christian community to be both united and holy. Trying to do so without prayerful, scriptural theology is simply impossible. If you don't believe me, look around the western world today.

“Historical Paul and “Systematic Theology””: To Start a Discussion” ch. 7

Paul's Early Letters



The Early Letters

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

Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

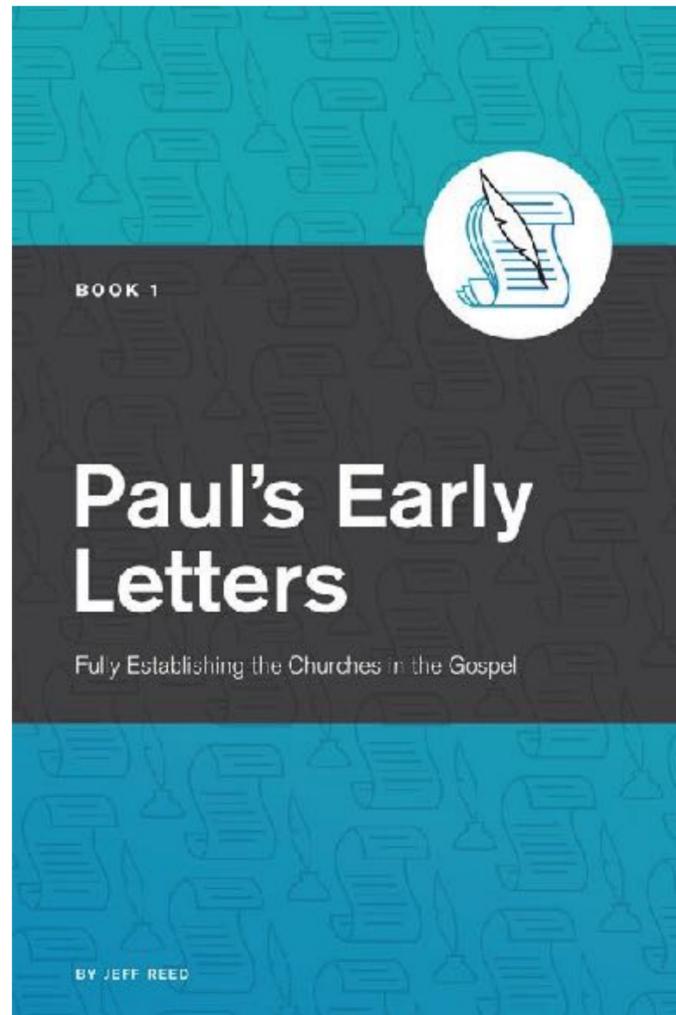
Book 3: The Thessalonian Correspondence: Conversion to the Gospel

Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Paul's Gospel Defended

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

Paul's Early Letters



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

Session 1: The Intent of Early Letters

Session 2: The Galatian Problem

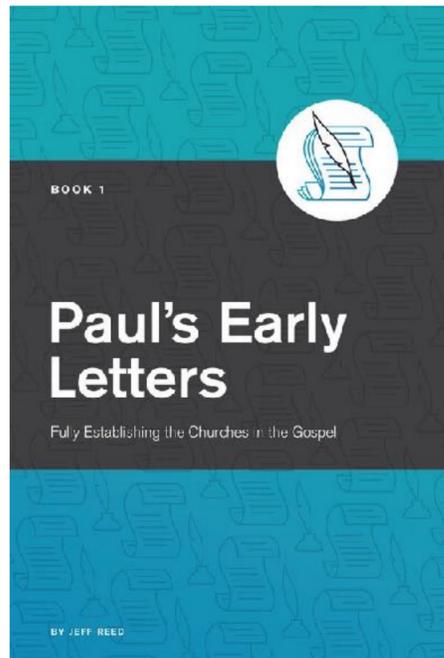
Session 3: The Thessalonians' Conversion

Session 4: The Corinthian Schisms

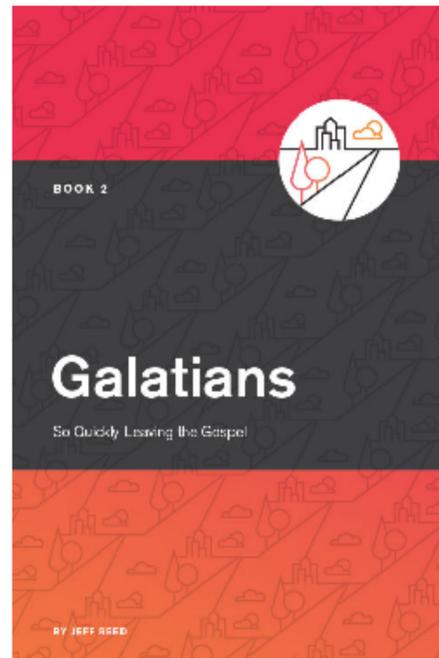
Session 5: The Roman Treatise

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry

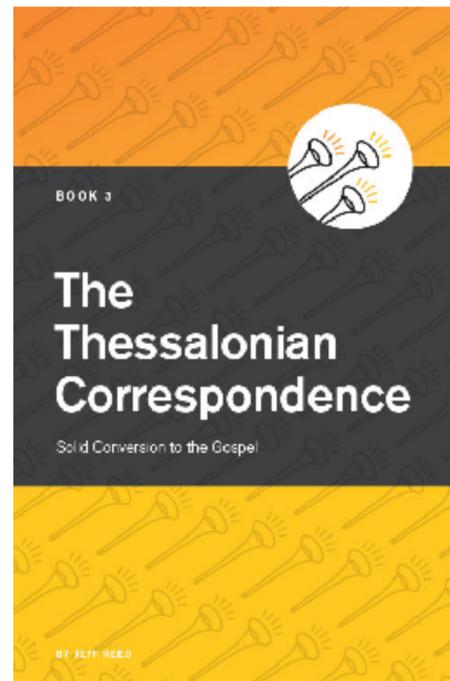
Paul's Early Letters



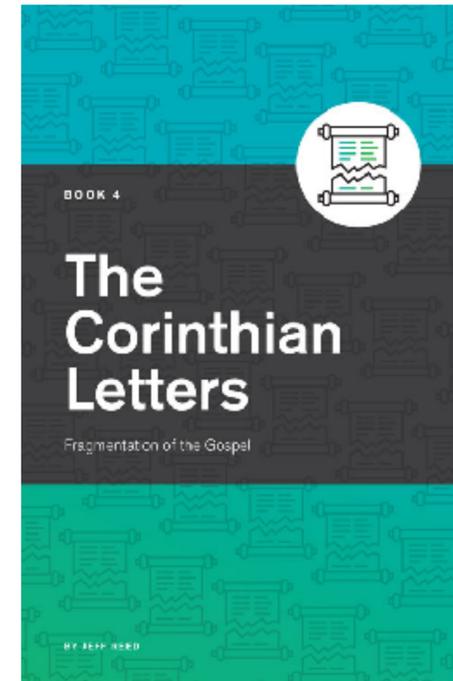
49–56 AD



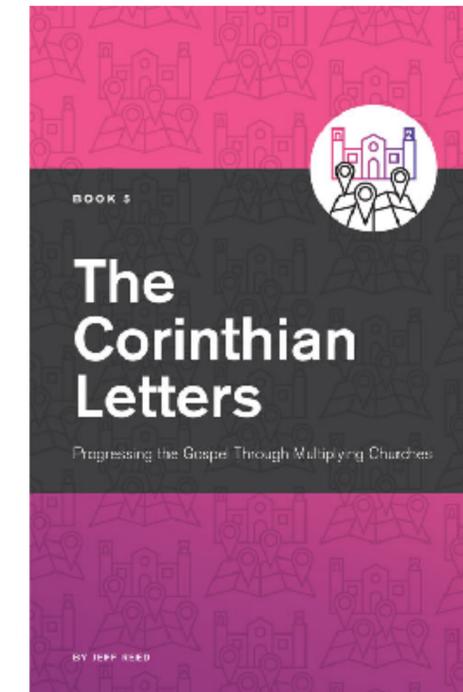
Autumn 49



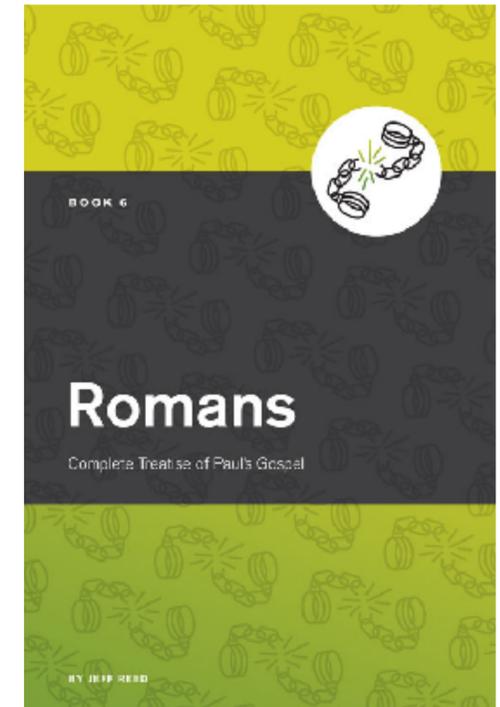
Winter/Summer 51 AD



September 53



June 56



November 56

Paul's Letters

The battle for the gospel went from Autumn 47 until the writing of Romans in the middle of November 56 AD—ten years

Paul's first confrontation with Peter, Autumn 47 AD (Gal. 2:1–10)

Peter in Antioch, Autumn 49 AD (Gal. 2:11–16)

Jerusalem Council, Autumn 49 AD

The early letters of Paul, Autumn 49 to writing Romans in 56 AD

It took Paul a decade to win that argument, which he accomplished with his Romans manifesto on the gospel.

Now on to his rather compact, full unveiling of the Church.

Paul's Early Letters

Romans is key to understanding the entire collection of Paul's early letters to his network of churches.

Several preliminary comments on the context of Romans in Paul's early letters:

1. It is the final and largest letter.
2. It is less occasional than the others—more of a manifesto.
3. It is bookended by sections that tell you it is a more complete treatment of the gospel than the others.
4. Its context is establishing the churches in the gospel, which was the front line of the battle.

Paul's Early Letters

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel, the proclamation of Jesus the Messiah, in accordance with the unveiling of the mystery kept hidden for long ages ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings, according to the command of the eternal God, for the obedience of faith among all the nations—²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus the Messiah, to whom be the glory to the coming ages! Amen.

Romans 16:25–27 (N. T. Wright)

Paul's Early Letters

Paul wants to add to their understanding of the gospel by bringing them a complete proclamation,

which will secure, clarify, or build a comprehensive defense of the gospel for them—thus establishing them completely.

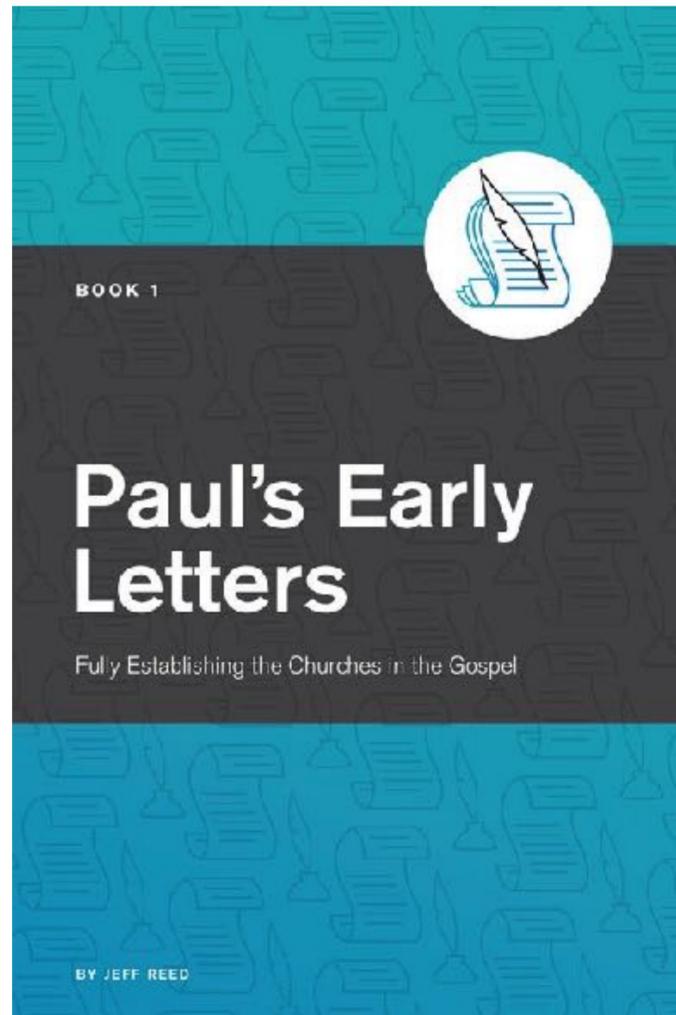
Paul's Early Letters

Notice the term he uses—*establish*.

This is central to the occasional purpose of Paul writing the letters. This can quickly be seen in 3 ways:

1. A central purpose of his 2nd journey was to establish the young churches, Acts 15:36–16:5.
2. He sent Timothy to Thessalonica with the first letter to establish the Thessalonians.
3. He summarizes the Romans letter as having established them in the gospel.

Paul's Early Letters



We will validate this in sessions 2–5, when we look at each of these early letters:

The Galatian letter

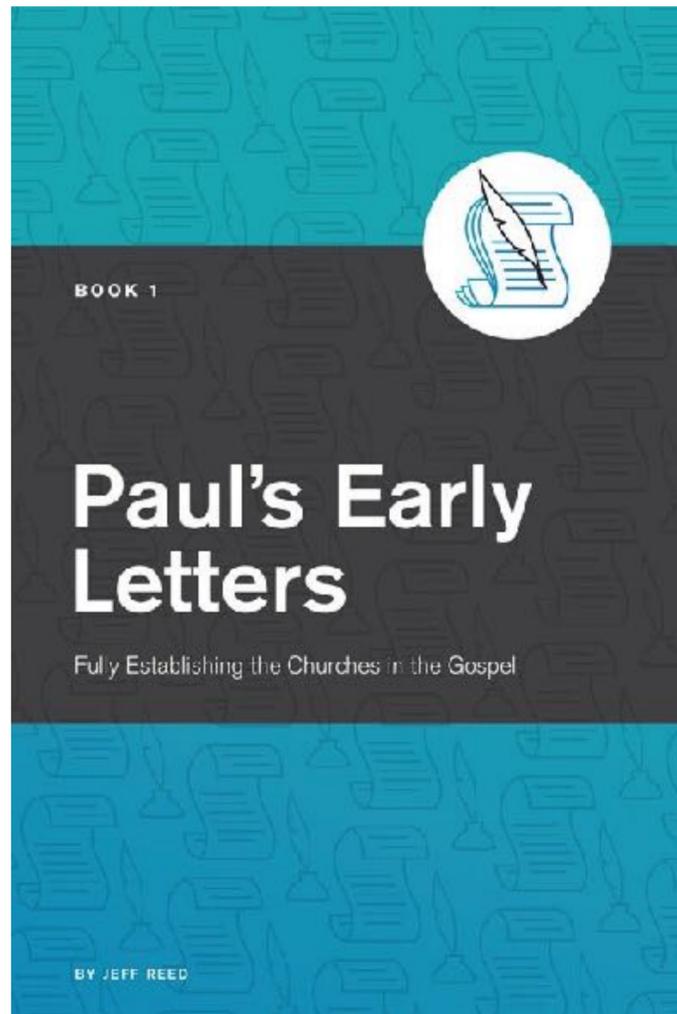
The Thessalonian correspondence

The Corinthian correspondence

The letter to the Romans

But for now, let's do a quick glance at each of Paul's correspondence to the churches in Galatia, in Thessalonica, to the Corinthian churches, and to the Roman churches.

Paul's Early Letters

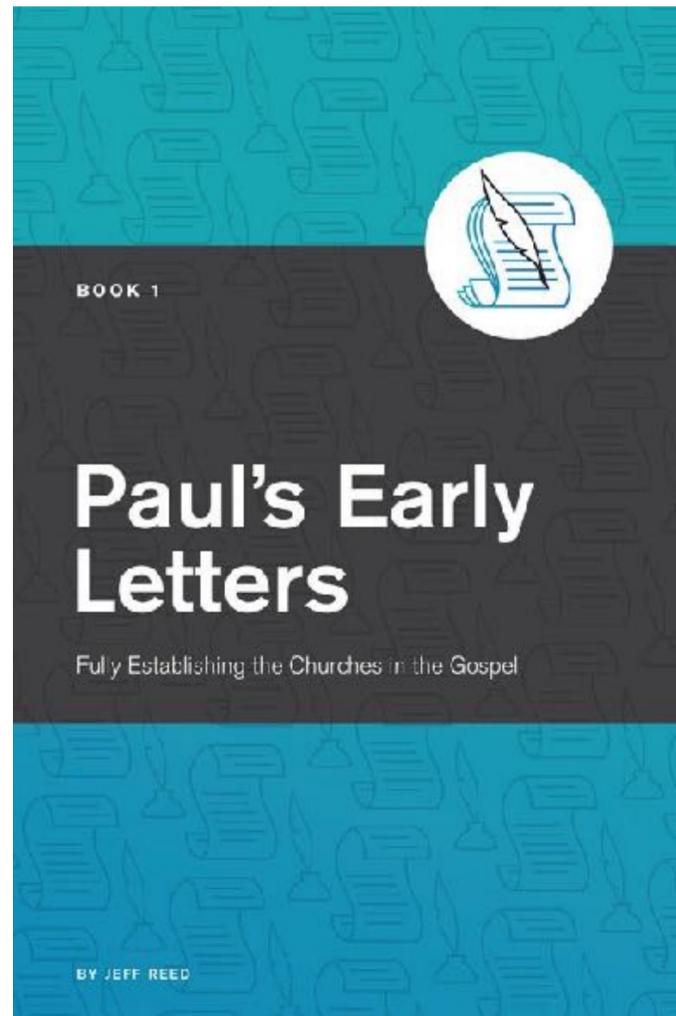


Book 1: The Early Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches in the Gospel

Session 2: The Galatian Problem

In Galatians, they left the gospel for another. Here Paul makes a case by confronting Peter, who actually formed the “kerygmatic formulae,” and roots the gospel in the Old Testament law, showing how this all fits in the original plan of God.

Paul's Early Letters

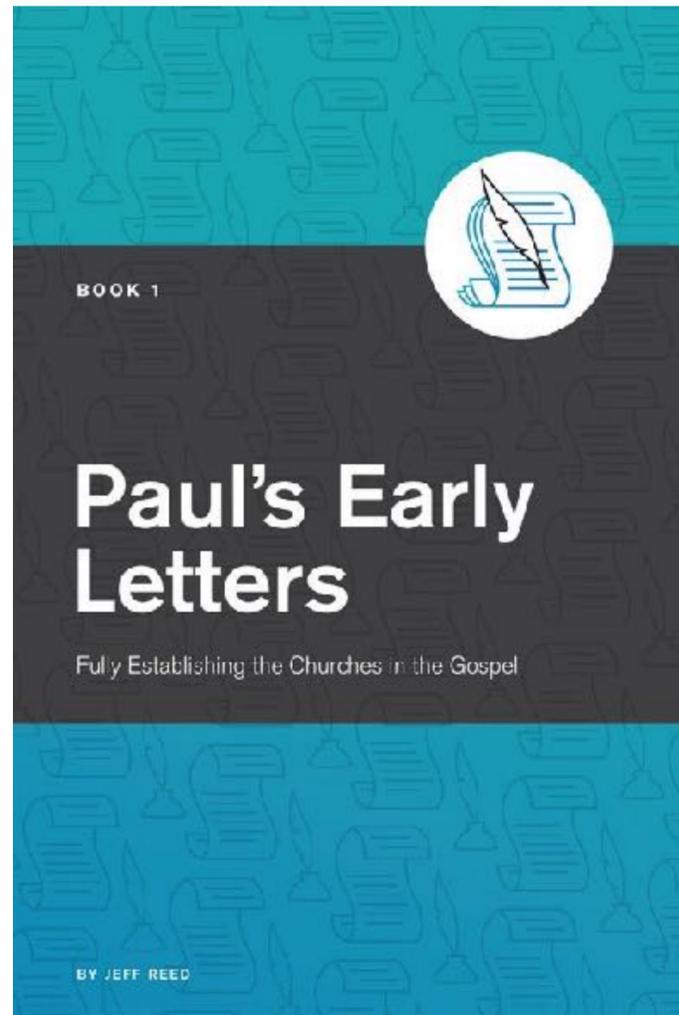


Book 1: The Early Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches in the Gospel

Session 3: The Thessalonians' Conversion

In the Thessalonian letters, building on their solid conversion to this gospel, Paul challenges them to become fully established in it.

Paul's Early Letters

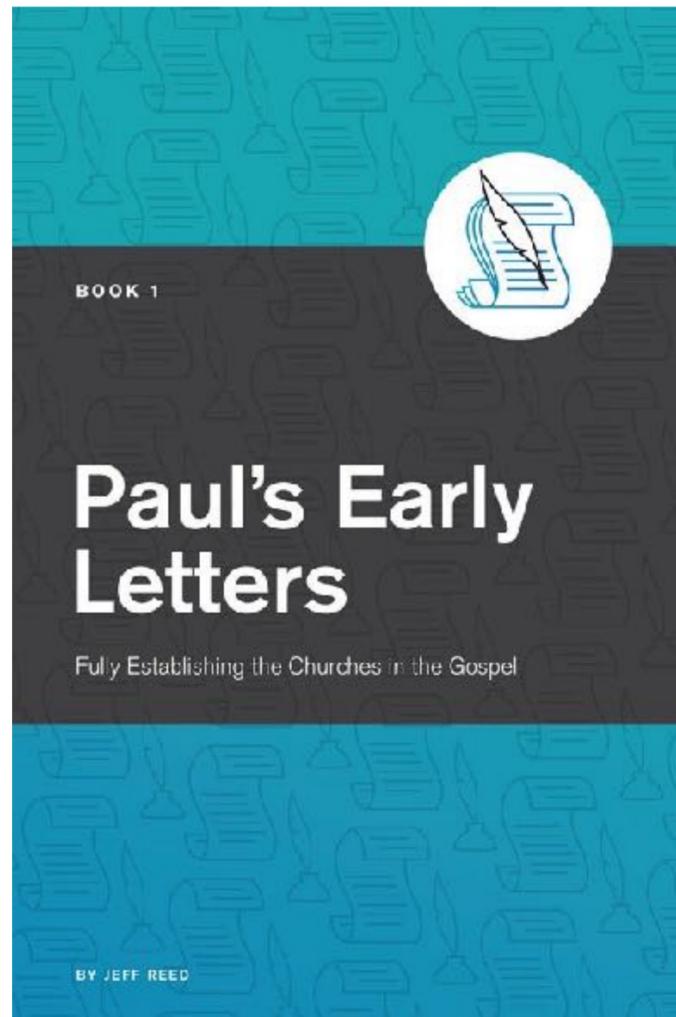


Book 1: The Early Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches in the Gospel

Session 4: The Corinthian Schisms

In the Corinthian correspondence, Paul relates the gospel to all the divisions in the Corinthian church, defending the gospel as the same one preached by all the apostolic leaders. It is affirmed in statement form in 1 Corinthians 15:1–6. He defends his apostleship in 2 Corinthians, opening the understanding of new covenant ministry.

Paul's Early Letters



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

Session 5: The Roman Treatise

Finally, Paul provides a complete treatise of the gospel to the Romans, introducing the letter with the kerygmatic statement to firmly establish the Roman churches in that gospel, thus fully convincing those who may be confused, by providing the complete gospel.

The Roman Treatise

Issue: Fully established in the gospel

Questions:

1. What was Paul's intent in writing this letter to the Roman churches? What does it mean for the Romans to be "fully established in the gospel"?
2. How could he call the gospel "his gospel"? How did he receive this full understanding of the gospel? What did he have to rethink those three years in Arabia and Damascus?
3. How does his argument unfold in Romans 1:16–15:13? What are the main points included in this full understanding of the gospel?
4. Why was Paul so passionate to see the Romans get this full understanding? What was on the line in his ministry strategy? in his network-wide strategy?

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The Roman Treatise

Now let's turn to Romans, probably Paul's greatest letter, in which his whole theology of the gospel unfolds.

This was probably what he was thinking through in the three years in the wilderness—his whole framework had to be rethought.

The Roman Treatise

Again, The last 3 verses of Romans give us the picture of what Paul was trying to accomplish in his letter.

The Roman Treatise

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel, the proclamation of Jesus the Messiah, in accordance with the unveiling of the mystery kept hidden for long ages ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings, according to the command of the eternal God, for the obedience of faith among all the nations — ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus the Messiah, to whom be the glory to the coming ages! Amen.

Romans 16:25–27 (N. T. Wright)

The Roman Treatise

How in the world can Paul call this “his gospel? Why is it his and not Peter’s or the other Jewish leaders of the church around Peter?

The Roman Treatise

¹¹ You see, brothers and sisters, let me make it clear to you: the gospel announced by me is not a mere human invention. ¹² I didn't receive it from human beings, nor was I taught it; it came through an unveiling of Jesus the Messiah. ¹³ You heard, didn't you, the way I behaved when I was still within "Judaism." I persecuted the church of God violently, and ravaged it. ¹⁴ I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age and people; I was extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵ But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to unveil his son in me, so that I might announce the good news about him among the nations—immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood. ¹⁷ Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. No, I went away to Arabia, and afterward returned to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to speak with Cephas. I stayed with him for two weeks.

Galatians 1:11–18

The Roman Treatise

What is Paul's point in telling his story of going away for 3 years? What was he doing?

He was rethinking everything. It took him three years. What came out of it? His gospel. Not Peter's. Not the other Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

Where did he get it? The whole picture was revealed to him by Jesus.

He did not receive it through human beings. He was not taught it.

The Roman Treatise

What does Paul mean when he says to the Romans “I have proclaimed to you my gospel, according to Jesus Christ.”

God unveiled the whole picture to him through Jesus Christ those 3 years in Arabia.

Peter and those in Jerusalem could not rethink the whole story.

The Roman Treatise

What did he rethink?

1. The Law
2. Israel
3. God's hidden plan
4. The current times
5. The future of Israel

He rethought the whole story. And he reframed the entire Law, the Prophets, and the Writings in light of the gospel—the good news.

The Roman Treatise

“...it came through an unveiling” Galatians 1:12

It took him 3 years. It evidently became progressively clear

- as he rethought his entire Jewish training and
- as he rethought the entire Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

No one else could see it clearly.

The Roman Treatise

What was his gospel?

The complete picture of what was unveiled to him the 3 years in Arabia is in Romans.

The argument of his full gospel is 1:16–15:13, his longest sustained argument in his letters.

The Roman Treatise

Paul's argument seems to have 4 phases to it in 1:16–15:13:

- 1:16–5:21 (chapters 1–5)
- 6:1–8:39 (chapters 6–8)
- 9:1–11:36 (chapters 9–11)
- 12:1–15:13 (chapters 12–15)

Next week I am going to string verses together so you can think it through and then condense it into one paragraph.

The Roman Treatise

Romans 12:1–2 sets the whole argument in a context that we must keep clear in our minds, to set the intention of his whole argument in 1:16–11:36.

¹ So, my dear family, this is my appeal to you by the mercies of God: offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Worship like this brings your mind into line with God's. ² What's more, don't let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. Instead, be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you can work out what God's will is — what is good, acceptable, and complete. Romans 12:1–2

The Roman Treatise

Romans 12:1–2 sets the whole argument in a context that we must keep clear in our minds, to set the intention of his whole argument in 1:16–11:36.

This is his intention:

In light of God's mercies (by faith in the Messiah, we are now part of this new family)

- make a solid commitment to this new life
- renew our minds (bring our minds in line with God's)
- allowing the Spirit to work out God's specific will in our lives

The Roman Treatise

Paul's argument seems to have 4 phases to it in 1:16–15:13:

- 1:16–5:21 (chapters 1–5)
- 6:1–8:39 (chapters 6–8)
- 9:1–11:36 (chapters 9–11)
- 12:1–15:13 (chapters 12–15)

Last week I encouraged you to read one section a day, 2 times each.

1. The first time just read it quickly.
2. The second reading put a double ** by the main idea of the section and a CC by each corollary concept (remember topoi Greek rhetoric).
3. Then condense his argument of the entire section into one paragraph.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (4–5 main points) in 1:6–5:21

1. God has been faithful to his covenant promise to Abraham to “bless all the families of the earth” through the Lord Jesus the Messiah, so all nations might be part of his family—receiving the “status of covenant membership.”
2. At one level, the nation of Israel is the same as everyone else, needing forgiveness of sins, which can only come through faith in the Messiah.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (4–5 main points) in 1:6–5:21

3. At another level, though Israel was chosen by God to be the stewards of the very oracles of God, the Law itself actually brought forward the knowledge of sin, and without faith they were not actually “true Jews” since membership into God's covenant with them was founded on faith, not on the Law.
4. Even though Israel had been unfaithful to the covenant promise, failing to take God's promises to the nations, God is faithful to His covenant to the nations through the Messiah — “faithfulness to faithfulness” — the covenant to the Messiah.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (one paragraph) 1:6–5:21

The gospel is rooted in the promise of the covenant relationship of God to Abraham, received by faith and now, through the Messiah, made available to everyone

thus validating God's faithfulness to His covenant through the faithfulness of the Messiah, that through Abraham and his family (nation) all the families (nations) of the earth would be blessed in His kingdom.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (4–5 main points) in 6:1–8:29:

1. Now that we are part of God's new family, based on God's faithfulness to fulfill His promise to bless all the nations through His covenant promise to Abraham, we need to present ourselves to God, as people alive from the dead, to serve His covenant purposes, behaving with a new quality of life.
2. If we go back and live under the law, we will be enslaved again to our own efforts and struggles, rather than living according to the pattern of teaching we have received, and being left to ourselves, we will miss the Spirit's work in our lives.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (4–5 main points) in 6:1–8:29:

3. We are now people of the Spirit, since Jesus' death made us part of the covenant promise; and the Spirit that raised Jesus will make this new life come alive as we follow the pattern of teaching received from Christ (as Paul is now making clear).
4. As the firstborn in this new family, the Spirit will work in our weakness on our behalf and will work all things to the good of God's purposes, shaping us according to the model of His Son, the Messiah, as this new family emerges globally, while God works toward the fulfillment of His kingdom.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (one paragraph) in 6:1–8:39

As a result of believing in the Messiah, we are part of His new family and indebted to serving His covenant purposes

and as we bring our minds in line with the pattern of the Messiah's teaching delivered to the churches, (as Paul is working it out in Romans), God, through His Spirit, will work those purposes out in our lives in a supernatural way.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (4–5 main points) in 9:1–11:26

1. The nation of Israel was not operating out of “knowledge.” They did not have a proper understanding of the Old Testament, seeing themselves as either earning or worthy of covenant membership as God's people—earning that covenant membership (law-based) or just because God chose them (faith-based).
2. As a result, Israel is in a state of being hardened by God until the nations are fully reached with the proclamation of the gospel, and at that time a hugely increased remnant of Israel will believe as the fulness of the Gentiles is realized.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (4–5 main points) in 9:1–11:26

3. As a result, the new Gentile churches need to avoid the same trap and not think more highly of themselves than they ought to, instead they must honor the Jews as conduits of the promises of God.
4. God's covenants and promises are irrevocable, which means the whole structure of history is set by God. And all aspects of the mystery—the church, the partial hardening of Israel, etc.—are all to demonstrate the incredible wisdom of God.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (one paragraph) in 9:1–11:26:

Israel misinterpreted the nature and purpose of being God's chosen people, replacing the promise with the law and, as a result, are now partially hardened until the gospel is fully proclaimed to the nations,

but God's covenant promises are irrevocable, and when the gospel has fully permeated the nations, that hardening will be lifted, and the nation of Israel as a whole will be saved—a hugely increased remnant.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (4–5 main points) in 12:1–15:13

Didache outline (“pattern of teaching” 6:17) “17 Thank God that, though you once were slaves to sin, you have become obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which you were committed.” NT Wright

1. One new family—each having gifts to help carry out God's purposes in community.
2. Be committed to one another ministry—in true, authentic community—based on love for one another.
3. Obey government—respecting authority—marked by a life of good deeds, modeled after Jesus, honoring all men.
4. Accept one another—being of one mind around the plan and purposes of God.

The Roman Treatise

The essence of Paul's argument (one paragraph) in 12:1–15:13

In light of all that God has done, we need to fully dedicate ourselves to serve Him, shaping our lives and worldview around the gospel (1:16–11:36) and the “pattern of teaching” (12:1–15:13), which allows the Holy Spirit to transform us

And fully participate in the plan and purposes of God, both locally and with the progress of the gospel as led by apostolic leaders in our generation.

The Roman Treatise

To fully establish the Romans in “his gospel,” which is the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they might fully participate with him in the progress of that gospel, as the key city in the Roman empire

by arguing that in light of all that God has done, we need to fully dedicate ourselves to serve Him, shaping our lives and worldview around the gospel (1:16–11:36)

and the “pattern of teaching” (12:1–15:13), which allows the Holy Spirit to transform us and fully participate in the plan and purposes of God, both locally and with the progress of the gospel as led by apostolic leaders in our generation

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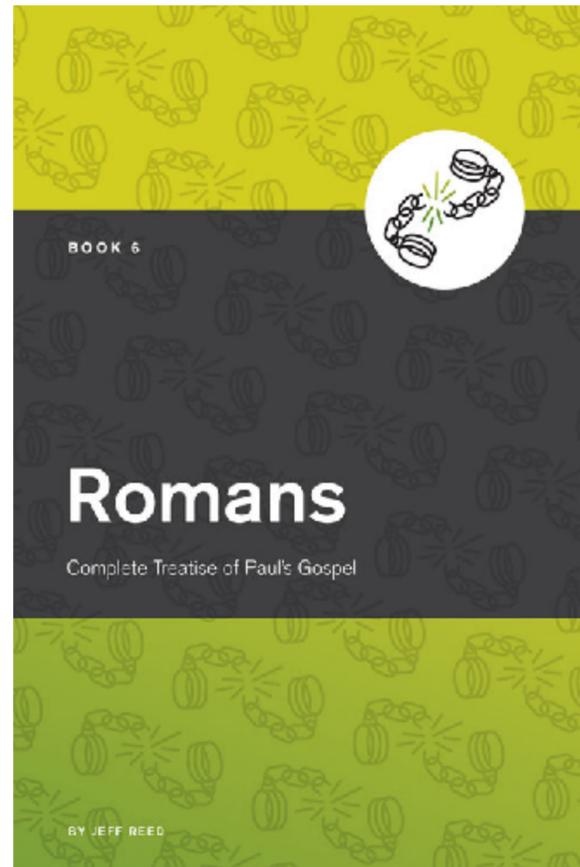
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The Corinthian Conflicts



Book 4: Romans: Complete Treatise of Paul's Gospel

Session 1: The Intention of Romans

Session 2: The Gospel and the Story

Session 3: The New Gospel Worldview

Session 5: The Reframing of the Jewish Story

Session 6: The Gospel in Transformed Community

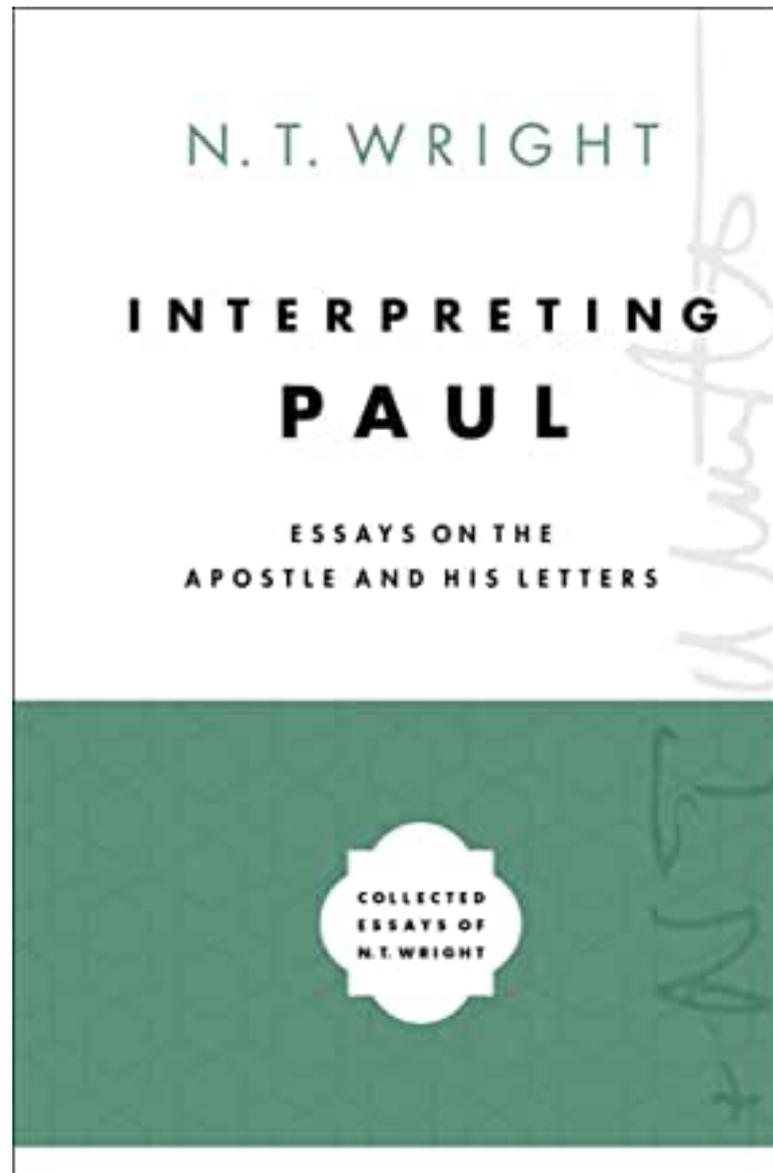
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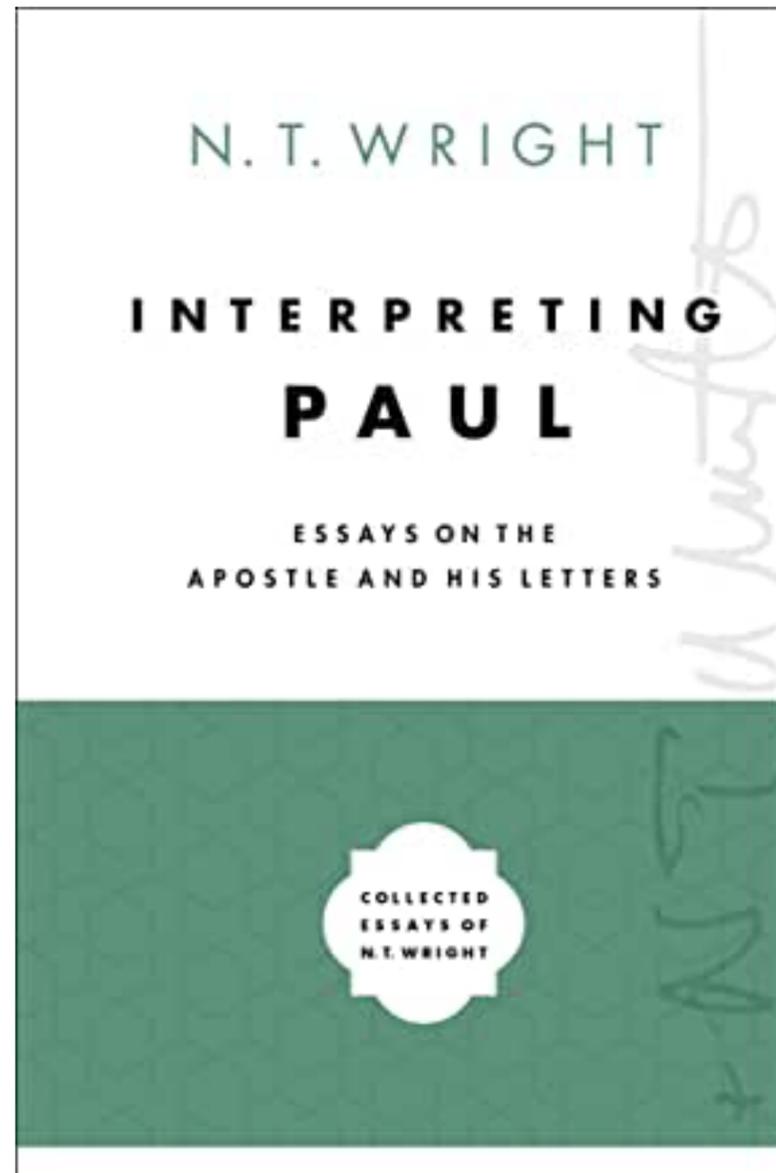
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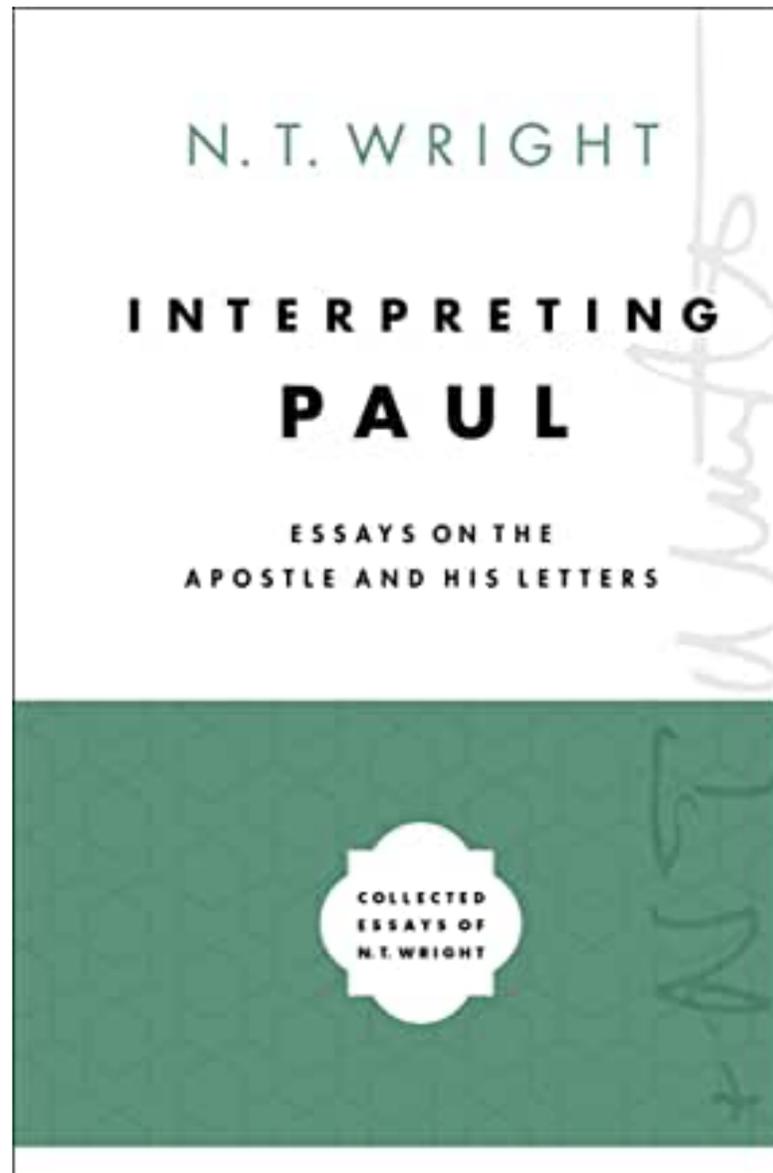
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Each community, then, and each generation, has to engage in the same exercise, the same discipline, the same activity; because this activity, this theologizing, is what will enable the central symbol to stand firm. It's hard enough trying to get a Christian community to be both united and holy. Trying to do so without prayerful, scriptural theology is simply impossible. If you don't believe me, look around the western world today.

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