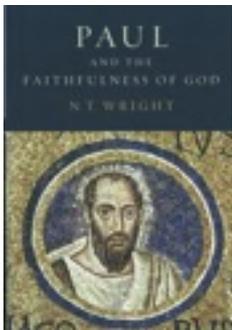


Issue: Establishing churches in the gospel

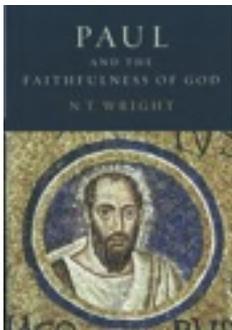
Questions:

1. What does it take, as seen in the Thessalonian letters, for churches to become established in the gospel?
2. In these letters, what are signs that churches are becoming established in the gospel?
3. According to Paul, what are signs that a church may not be established in the gospel?
4. Using Paul's standard, why do you think so few churches today are truly established in the gospel?



¹⁴ If anyone doesn't obey our word in this letter, take note of them. Don't have any dealings with such a person, so that they may be ashamed.¹⁵ Don't consider a person like this an enemy: rebuke them as a member of the family.¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

2 Thessalonians 3:14–16 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

The point of all Paul's early letters to his churches is to establish them in the gospel.

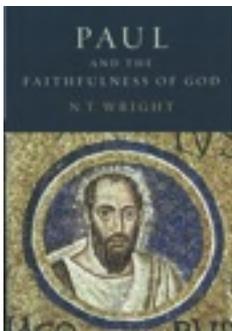
In this second letter, we get a clear picture of what that looks like.

There are two parts to being established in the gospel:

First, we have to understand the gospel—the *kerygma*.

Second, we must embrace the lifestyle that accompanies it—the Teaching or didache given in that authoritative teaching

Paul's Early Epistles



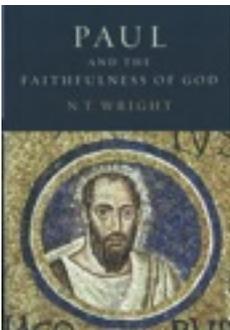
Mastering the Scriptures Series

New Testament Theology

1. **The Gospels (5 booklets), early 2017**
2. Paul's Letters (13 booklets)
Early letters (6 booklets), early 2018
3. The Jewish Encyclicals (5 booklets)
4. Johannine Writings (4 booklets)

Old Testament Theology

1. **The Story (1 booklet), 2016**
2. The Law (2 booklets)
3. The Prophets (4 booklets)
4. The Writings (5 booklets)



The Early Letters

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

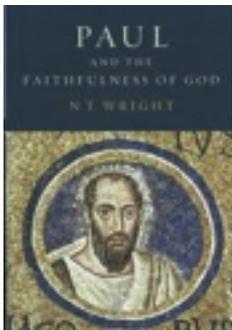
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the
Gospel

Book 3: The Thessalonians 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



The Early Letters

We will finish Thessalonians next week

Then in 2017 we will do 3 more booklets:

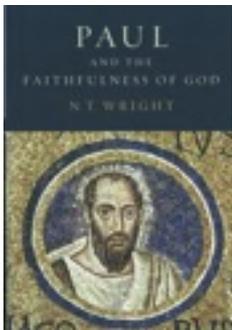
1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Romans

It is scheduled out for the whole year.

They will all be published early 2018



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Intent of The Early Letters

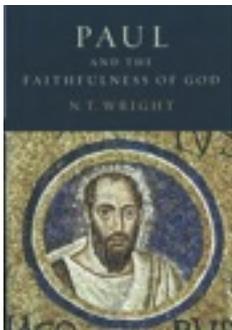
Session 2: The Galatian Problem

Session 3: The Thessalonians' Conversion

Session 4: The Corinthian Schisms

Session 5: The Roman Treatise

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry

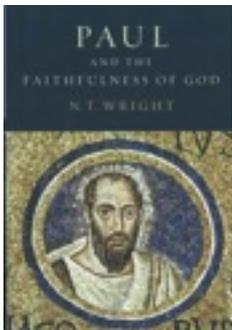


Paul's Early Epistles

The intention of these early letters is 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 in 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

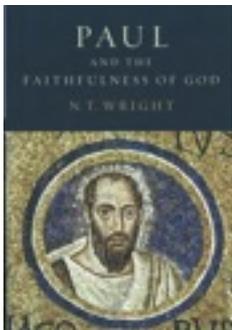
We are validating this in the six books of this series,
as we look at the correspondence of these early
letters:

The Galatian letter

The Thessalonian correspondence

The Corinthian correspondence

The letter to the Romans



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Galatian Problem

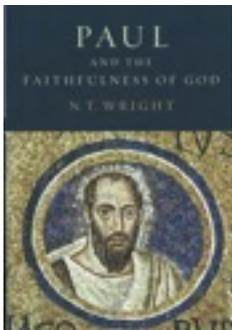
Session 2: The Pure Gospel

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

Session 1: Paul's Concern for the Thessalonians

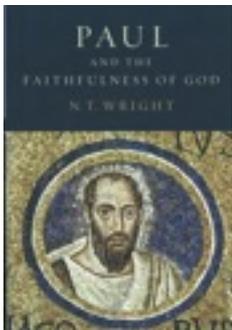
Session 2: Their Dramatic Conversion

Session 3: Three Emerging Problems—Letter 1

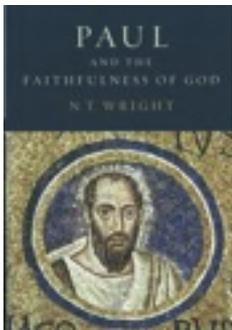
Session 4: Further Clarification—Letter 2

Session 5: Solidifying Their Conversion

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



In session one, we focused on Paul's intention in writing the letters to the Thessalonian churches.



Paul's Early Epistles

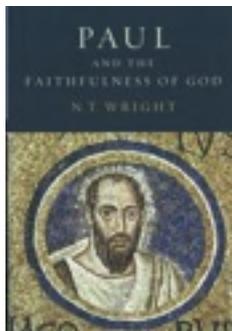
Intention Statement for the Thessalonian Letters

To further establish the Thessalonians, deepening their understanding of the full implications of the gospel they recently embraced

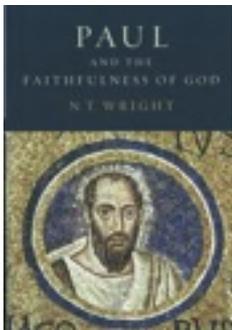
that they might not be unsettled, but would remain strong and focused amidst suffering and emerging tensions in the churches,

by challenging them, in the first letter, to fully embrace the new lifestyle in community, as laid out in the emerging traditions handed down by Paul from Christ.

by further clarifying his challenges to them in the first letter, giving them specific instructions for solving problems that had the potential to destabilize them.

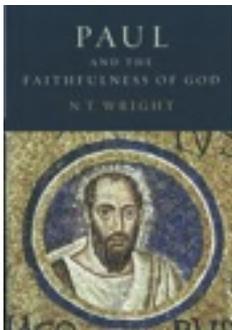


In session two, we focused on the conversion process of the Thessalonians.



Paul's Early Epistles

Conversion is *misunderstood* because it is removed from its literary context, *compartmentalized* because it is separated from the establishing process, and *reductionistic* because it is reduced to a moment-in-time event only.



Marks of Solid Conversion:

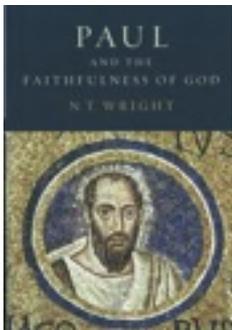
- accomplishment of your faith
- the hard work of your love
- the patience of your hope

Their faith turned into action

The *accomplishment of faith* was their own dramatic proclamation of the gospel everywhere.

Their *hard work of love* was towards the Thessalonian churches themselves.

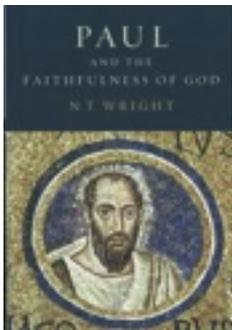
And their *patience of hope* was how they were responding to persecution and suffering.



Paul's Early Epistles

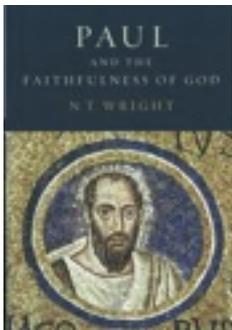
A complete conversion process looks like this:

1. An initial solid response, in which the gospel is fully embraced, takes several weeks of exposure to the Word of God and results in those receiving the gospel beginning to proclaim it themselves.
2. It must be immediately followed up by careful nurturing and exhorting.
3. It is then followed up in the context of a new community by leaders who know the Word—a balance of modality leaders (local) and sodality leaders (apostolic).



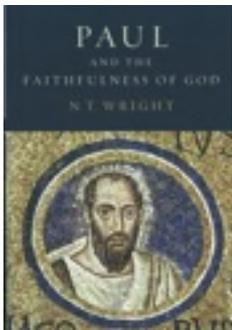
Paul's Early Epistles

In the last session, we turned our attention to 3 areas Paul addresses in the Thessalonian churches, in order to fully establish them.

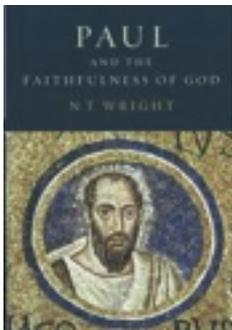


The Thessalonian churches were only 9 months old, but they needed to be challenged in 3 areas:

1. Changing their whole lifestyle from one of sexual impurity to living lives set apart to God.
2. Developing charitable concern for the whole family, demonstrated in their own hard work and generosity.
3. Fully embracing the gospel's (kerygma) claim of the return of Christ; not losing hope when loved ones die.



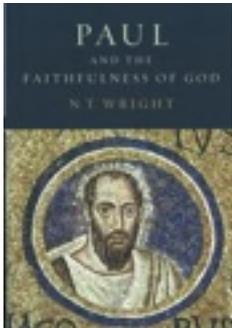
In this session, we return to two of the three problems Paul addressed in his first letter and will build on that instruction.



Passage: 2 Thessalonians

Questions:

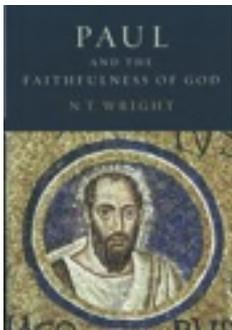
1. What is Paul still worried about with the Thessalonian churches? Where is the confusion coming from?
2. What problems still need attention?
3. How does Paul build on the arguments of his first letter? What additional instruction does he give?
4. How does Paul challenge the church to deal with those not listening?



Paul's Early Epistles

Paul writes a second letter to deal more thoroughly with their primary problem: the steadfastness of their hope. He expands on the lifestyle that grows out of that conclusion by both dealing with those refusing to work and also strengthening the authority of the instructions he has given them.

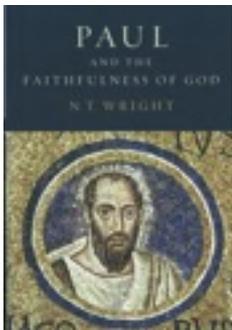
In addition, he instructs the Thessalonian churches on how to deal with those who do not listen.



Paul's Early Epistles

³ We owe God a constant debt of gratitude concerning you, my dear family. It is only right and proper. Your faith is growing marvelously, and the love which every single one of you has for each other is multiplying. ⁴ As a result, we ourselves can tell all the churches of God how proud we are of you—of your patience and loyalty in all your troubles, and in all the sufferings you are going through.

2 Thessalonians 1:3–4 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

This passage gives a very important clue as to what is still missing in their response from his first letter.

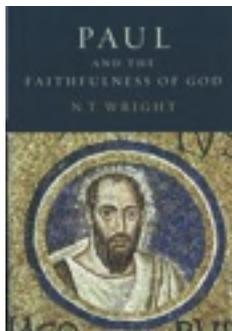
He commends them on their faith and their love, but not on their hope.

“Your faith is growing marvelously”

“and the love which every single one of you has for each other is multiplying”

But no commendation on the steadfastness of their hope, which is at the heart of this second letter.

Paul's Early Epistles



Paul's argument so far in 1 Thessalonians, on the "steadfastness of hope" is simply this:

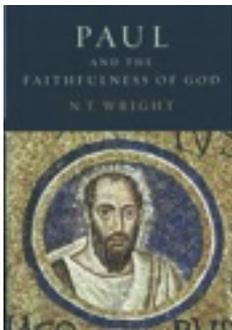
Point 1: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

When Christ returns to set up His kingdom, those who have died will rise first, then we will be gathered out to meet Him as He is releasing His fury on the world, which is opposing Him, and as He sets up His kingdom.

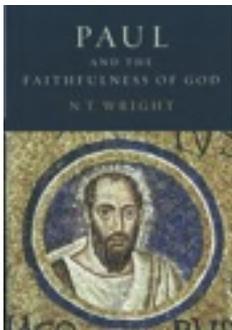
Point 2: 1 Thessalonians 5:1–10

We do not know when He will come, but when the world is claiming world peace and safety, He will appear, will release His fury on the world, and will set up His kingdom. We will all be part of it, so stay focused, be alert, and keep the hope the gospel demands of us who embrace it.

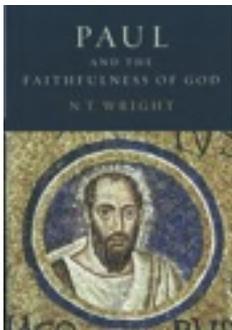
Paul's Early Epistles



In the second letter, he now returns to their hope and the issue of teachers continuing to stir up the churches on this issue.



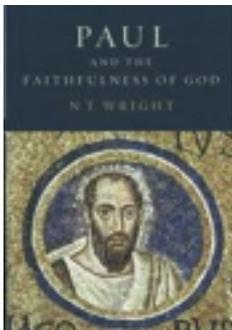
He continues the argument for his purpose of this instruction



Paul's Early Epistles

⁴ As a result, we ourselves can tell all the churches of God how proud we are of you—of your patience and loyalty in all your troubles, and in all the sufferings you are going through. ⁵ All this is a clear sign of the just judgment of God, to make you thoroughly worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering—
⁶ since it is just, on God’s part, to pay back with suffering those who inflict suffering on you, ⁷ and to give you, with us, respite from your sufferings.

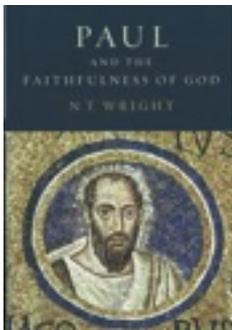
2 Thessalonians 1:4–7 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

⁷ This will come about when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his powerful angels, ⁸ in a flaming fire, meting out punishment to those who don't know God and those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his power, ¹⁰ when he comes to be glorified in all his holy ones, and to be marveled at by all who believe in him, because our testimony to you was met with faith, on that day.

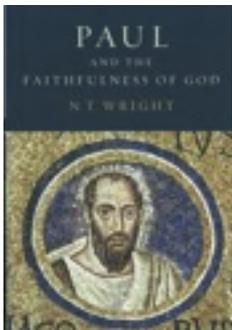
2 Thessalonians 1:7–10 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

The scene seems to be this:

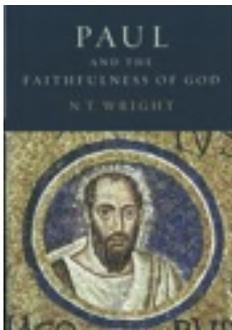
1. Christ returns with His angels to fight against those who resist Him (the assembled nations—
inferred in chapter 2)
 2. The believers (the churches) will marvel at what they are seeing.
 3. Many will believe and will be part of the kingdom Christ is setting up.
 4. Those opposing Him will still oppose Him at His appearance and will be destroyed.
 5. Thus those progressing His kingdom, the churches all around the world, will be vindicated, and they will be worthy of the kingdom He is fully setting up.
- Paul's Early Epistles*
-



The rest of the scene is hard to recreate because we know Paul had previously taught the Thessalonians more completely.

We also know the Gospels were not written yet. So he did not have Matthew 24 and 25, as Matthew recorded it, but he probably had its essence.

But he did not have Revelation, which was Jesus' revelation to the 7 churches in which He put all the pieces together.

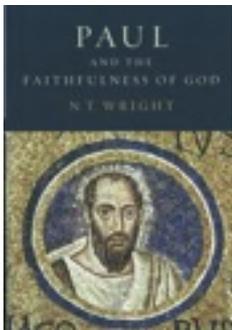


Both Peter and Paul, as well as all the Apostles of the day, did not have the complete picture, because it was still unfolding.

Peter probably understood the full gospel as revelation was unfolding. Paul, as we will see in Romans, filled it all out.

Paul may have thought the return of Christ was coming soon, culminating in what happened with the destruction of Jerusalem, or some short time thereafter.

John made it clear in Revelation that the picture was bigger than anyone thought.



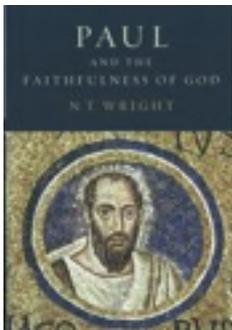
Paul's Early Epistles

What we know from Revelation perfectly matches this section:

- Christ will return with His angels.
- Mass battles will ensue that will destroy all opposing Christ.
- All the churches will marvel and be vindicated.

We know from Revelation that Christ will reign over the nations for 1,000 years in His kingdom with the churches.

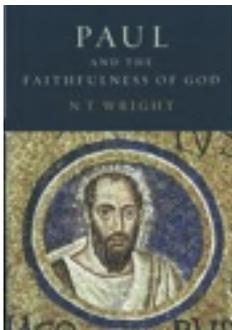
Then the new heavens and new earth will come.



Paul's Early Epistles

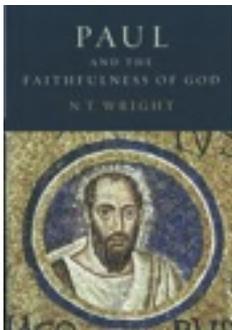
So whether Paul knew this fully or not, he was encouraging the Thessalonians that their suffering and persecution would be vindicated when Christ returns.

So endure the suffering and anticipate His return, rather than becoming unsettled by the death of loved ones and by those who were circulating other letters and teaching.



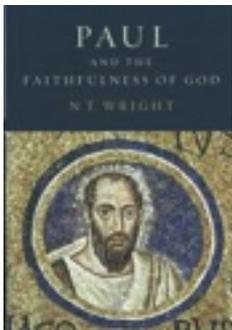
¹¹ To that end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may complete every plan he has to do you good, and every work of faith in power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 (N. T. Wright)



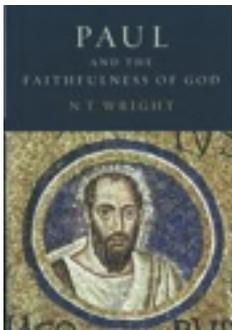
Paul's Early Epistles

Now he returns to complete his instructions on the coming of Christ



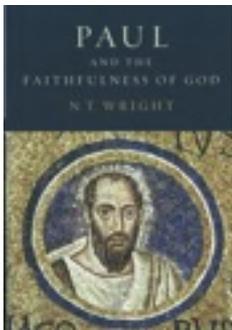
Paul's Early Epistles

2:1 Now concerning the royal presence of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, and our gathering together around him, this is our request, my dear family.
2 Please don't be suddenly blown off course in your thinking, or be unsettled, either through spiritual influence, or through a word, or through a letter supposedly from us, telling you that the day of the Lord has already arrived. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. You see, it can't happen unless first the rebellion takes place, and the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, is revealed. 4 He is the one who sets himself against every so-called god or cult object, and usurps their role, so that he installs himself in God's temple, and makes himself out to be a god. 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 (N. T. Wright)



⁵ Don't you remember that I told you this while I was with you? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining him so that he will be revealed at his proper time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the restrainer is in place— until he is taken away; ⁸ and then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth, and will wipe him out with the unveiling of his presence.

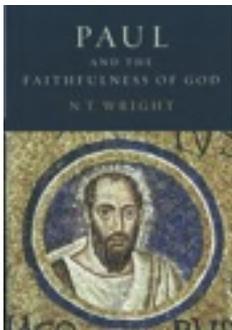
2 Thessalonians 2:5–8 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

⁹ The presence of the lawless one will be accompanied by the activity of the satan, with full power, with signs, and spurious wonders, ¹⁰ with every kind of wicked deceit over those on the way to ruin, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For that reason God sends upon them a strong delusion, leading them to believe the lie, ¹² so that judgment may come upon all who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness.

2 Thessalonians 2:9–12 (N. T. Wright)

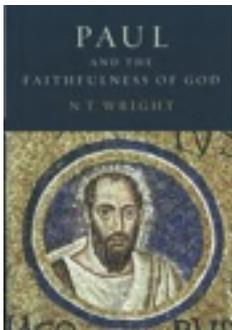


Paul's Early Epistles

What additional does he remind them of here?

In essence

1. Christ will not return until the man of lawlessness is revealed and sets himself up as God. He is the one who will oppose Christ and His kingdom, which means he opposes churches worldwide.
2. The spirit of this lawlessness was already at work, which while true then, tells me Paul did not have the full sense of the distance of time.
3. The rebellion is a global resistance to Christ and His grand strategy—His churches and His final redemption of Israel (Romans 9–11 which we will study in this series).

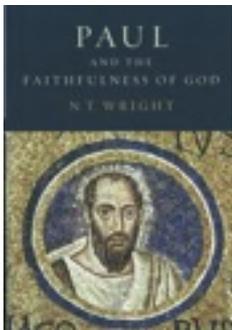


Paul's Early Epistles

Back to what Paul knew (Revelation was not yet written).

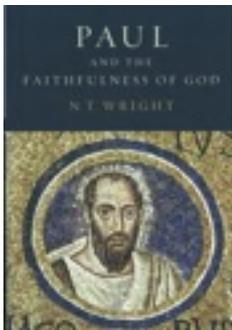
In essence:

1. He may have known all of that, but probably not, because of the way he seems to be writing.
2. He probably thought what was to happen, the destruction of Jerusalem, which was on the horizon, was around when Christ would return.
3. We now know that was only a snapshot of many more such events to come, and we have the picture completed by Christ's full revelation to John for the 7 churches, around 95 A.D.



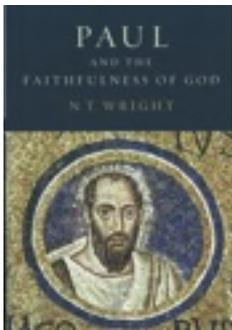
Personally I think this:

1. There will be massive birth pangs that will lead to the revelation of a world ruler.
2. In the midst of all the turmoil, over a period of time, Christ will return.
3. The churches will gather around Him and marvel as this is all happening.
4. God will destroy this world ruler and his world government and set up His kingdom.
5. So do not be blown off course by those who are teaching something different.



Paul's Early Epistles

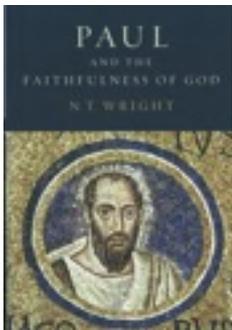
Paul returns to the purpose and authority of his instructions.



Paul's Early Epistles

¹⁵ So then, my dear family, stand firm, and hold on tight to the traditions which you were taught, whether through what we said or through our letter. ¹⁶ And may our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself, and God our father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and word.

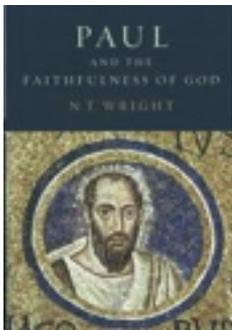
2 Thessalonians 2:15–7 (N. T. Wright)



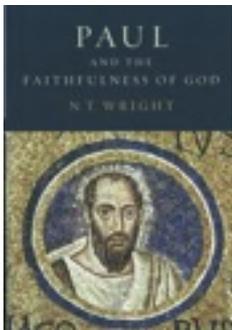
Paul's Early Epistles

What did Paul understand about his own teaching and letters?

1. His teaching and letters are the “traditions” they were taught—the authoritative teaching.
2. All other teachings and letters are false; they should not be “unsettled” or “blown off course” by them. (2:2)

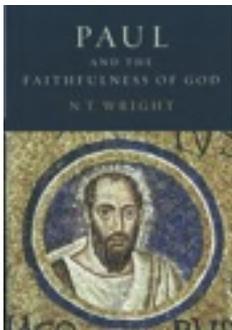


Now Paul picks up his argument from 1 Thessalonians and deals more extensively with their second issue of busybodies not wanting to work, but causing problems in the churches.



⁶ Here is a command we have for you, my dear family, in the name of our Lord Jesus the Messiah. Keep away from any member of the family who is **stepping out of line**, and not behaving according to the tradition that you received from us.

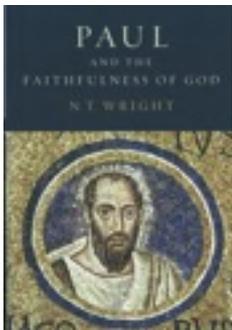
2 Thessalonians 3:6 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

⁷ You yourselves know, after all, how you should copy us. We didn't **step out of line**, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. We worked night and day, with labor and struggle, so as not to place a burden on any of you. ⁹ It wasn't that we don't have the right; it was so that we could give you an example, for you to copy us. ¹⁰ And, indeed, when we were with you, we gave you this command: those who won't work shouldn't eat!

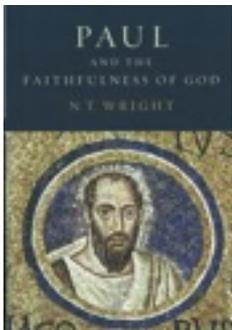
2 Thessalonians 3:7–10 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

¹¹ You see, we hear that there are some among you who are **stepping out of line**, behaving in an unruly fashion, not being busy with real work, but just busybodies. ¹² To people like that we give this commandment and exhortation in the Lord Jesus the Messiah: do your own work in peace, and eat your own bread. ¹³ As for you, my dear family, don't get tired of doing what is right!

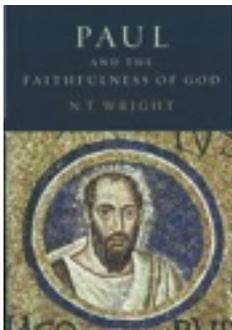
2 Thessalonians 3:11–13 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

¹⁴ If anyone doesn't obey our word in this letter, take note of them. Don't have any dealings with such a person, so that they may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Don't consider a person like this an enemy: rebuke them as a member of the family. ¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

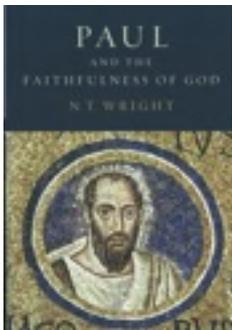
2 Thessalonians 3:14–16 (N. T. Wright)



Paul's Early Epistles

Dealing with those not following his instructions from the second letter:

1. Keep away from those who are not following his teaching and who, by word or letter, distort the kerygma—by ignoring Paul’s teaching about the return of Christ (and the gospel for that matter). This is a person not following Paul’s authoritative teaching handed down to them from Christ, which he calls “stepping out of line.”
2. Don’t treat them as an enemy just refuse to “have any dealings” with them.



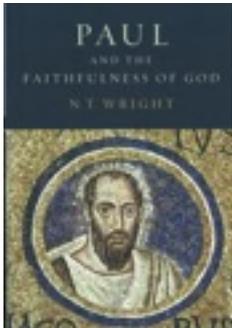
Two key words here

“stepping out of line”

a sense of not being in order (BAGD), to break rank (WSNT), disorderly life, used of a soldier (LSJ)

“have any dealings”

Mix up together (LSJ), to have conversation (WSNT), to meet, be refreshed together (DBL)

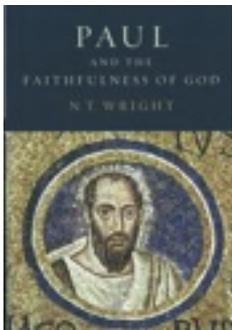


Paul's Early Epistles

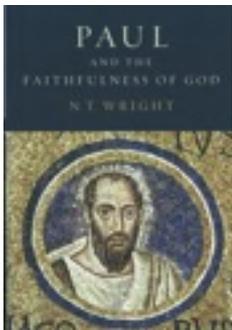
Issue: Establishing churches in the gospel

Questions:

1. What does it take, as seen in the Thessalonian letters, for churches to become established in the gospel?
2. In these letters, what are signs that churches are becoming established in the gospel?
3. According to Paul, what are signs that a church may not be established in the gospel?
4. Using Paul's standard, why do you think so few churches today are truly established in the gospel?



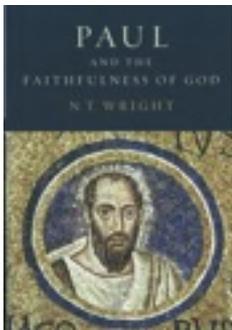
To become *fully established* means that we are in line with the the tradition, the authoritative teaching handed down by Paul, in word and letter, to the churches.



Paul's Early Epistles

In this particular letter, it focuses on the return of Christ, the end of the kerygma—the gospel. It affects how we see the world—our worldview. How we see “the spirit of lawlessness” toward Christ:

- UN and its stance toward Israel—a global spirit
- Obama administration—setting up a global system of government
- US—view towards Christians as opposed to Islam, political correctness policies, world government; rejection of Christian views but acceptance of Islam (women)—“spirit of lawless one”
- New policies in Russia, Nepal, China toward Christian NGOs
- Christianity driven out of Middle East, slaughtered

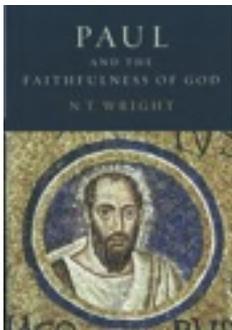


In the broader sense of the letter, it means that part of being established in the gospel is that we align our lives very carefully with the teaching (the didache).

Paul makes it clear that the teaching he delivered to the churches relates to being established in the gospel.

Churches are not established in the gospel if they do not line up their lifestyles around the traditions delivered by the Apostles to the churches: the teaching, the faith, the deposit, the sound doctrine.

The kerygma and the didache are intertwined — one follows the other.

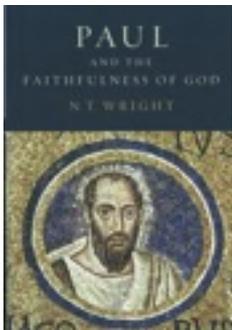


Paul's Early Epistles

Why do we work so hard to get everyone established in *The First Principles*?

So we are all “in line” with the teaching, thus firm in the traditions passed on to the first churches.

Today, this is virtually ignored in Western churches, and thus they are unestablished. In the US, Christians are 85% nominal, and we are sliding into a post-Christian culture; millennial Christians are clueless.



Paul's Early Epistles