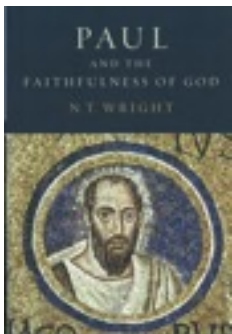


Four weeks ago, before my India–Africa trip, we began a new study in our series on Paul’s early letters —The Corinthian Correspondence

We, of course, are beginning with 1 Corinthians.

I asked everyone to be reading 1 Corinthians several times before I got back.



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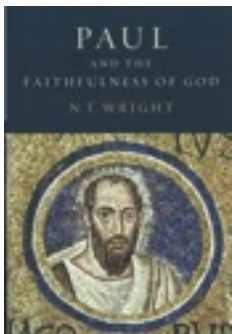
*Paul's Early Epistles*

Huge issues here!

Not understanding the Corinthian letters is why we have the fragmentation of denominationalism.

Luther recovered the gospel, but failed to build networks of churches on it. As a result, all kinds of secondary traditions were built on it leading to denominationalism.

Even N. T. Wright, while also recovering the gospel, has failed to build on it, instead continuing to live in his secondary tradition. He breaks out of it in some of his quotes, but still lives in the Anglican system.



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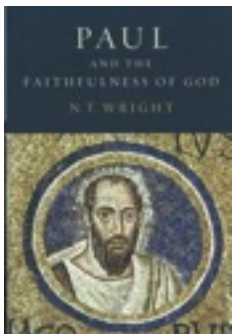
*Paul's Early Epistles*

Four weeks ago I introduced you to the Corinthian correspondence and some of the key books and articles to read from the perspective of early Graeco-Roman research.

That is how I have developed the “paradigm breaking” research on Paul’s letters.

This morning, in Session 1, we will attempt to discover Paul’s intent in writing the Corinthian letters.

But first, let’s begin with discussions at our tables as a primer.



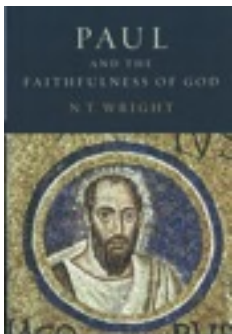
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Passage: The Corinthian Letters

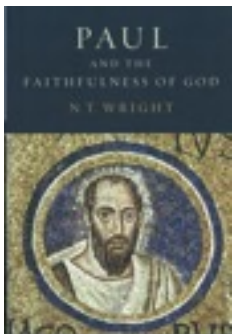
## Questions:

1. Why do you think Paul wrote these letters? What was his intention?
2. What was the main problem Paul was confronting with the Corinthian churches?
3. What are some of the ways this problem was manifesting itself in the churches? How did Paul become aware of the extent of these manifestations?
4. In what way did Paul relate a full understanding of the gospel to the fundamental solution to these manifestations?



# Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

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



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

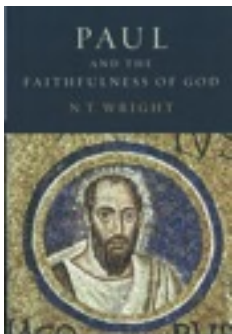
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

# The Early Letters

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

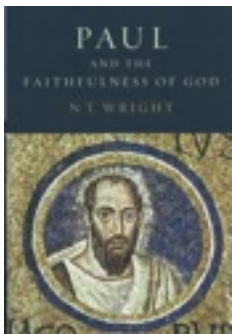
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

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



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

Session 1: The Intent of The Early Letters

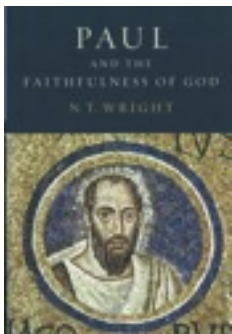
Session 2: The Galatian Problem

Session 3: The Thessalonian Conversion

Session 4: The Corinthian Schisms

Session 5: The Roman Treatise

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



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*Paul's Early Epistles*



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

Session 1: The Galatian Problem

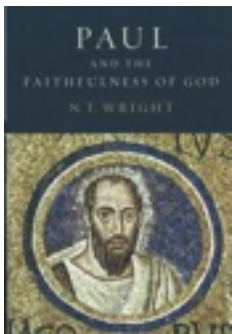
Session 2: The Pure Gospel

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



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

Session 1: Paul's Concern for the Thessalonians

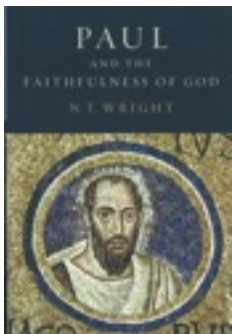
Session 2: Their Dramatic Conversion

Session 3: Three Emerging Problems—Letter 1

Session 4: Further Clarification—Letter 2

Session 5: Solidifying Their Conversion

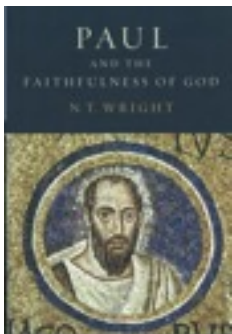
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



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 to that growing and broadening understanding of the kerygma and its implications.

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



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

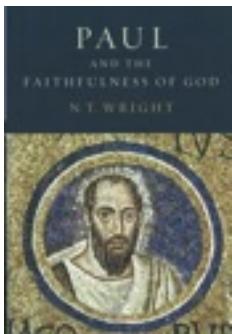
We will validate this in the six books of this series, as we look at the correspondence of these early letters:

The Galatian letter

The Thessalonian correspondence

The Corinthian correspondence

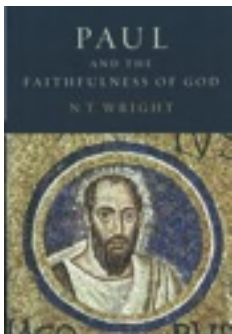
The letter to the Romans



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

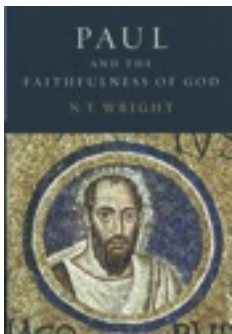


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

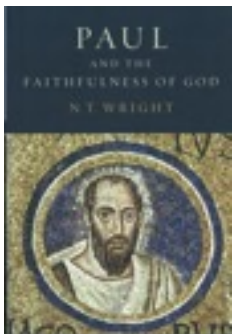
In addition, we will be relying on a wealth of early Graeco–Roman research, as gathered by a set of scholars over the last 40 years, as we are attempting to grasp the intention of these letters.



The key work and author carrying the conversation is

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

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

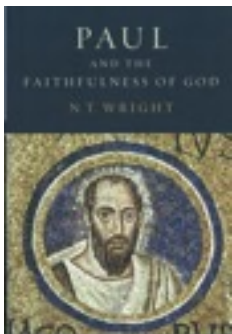


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

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



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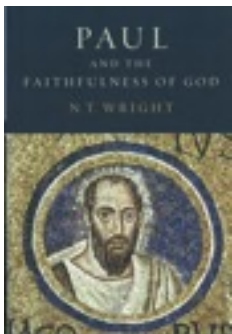
*Paul's Early Epistles*



Two books contribute to getting on top of the conversation:

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

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



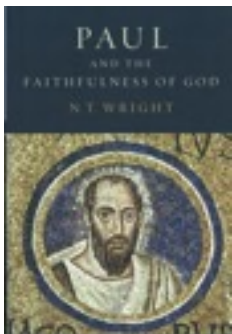
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

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

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

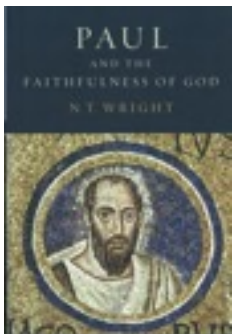


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

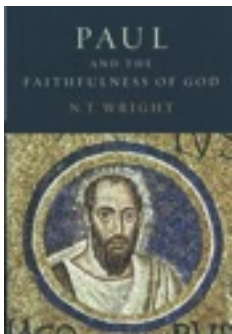
I will also use the Corinthian volumes of *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*

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



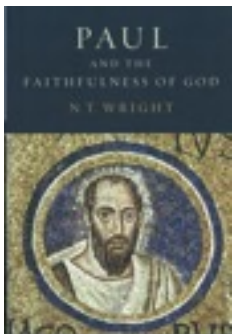
As usual, I will use N. T. Wright's treatment of the gospel in the Corinthian letters in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Fortress, 2013).

The use of Wright will be for tracing the development of the gospel in the Corinthian letters, although most of his work focuses on Galatians and Romans, which is also why he misses the focus on the quest for the historical Church, of which 1 and 2 Corinthians are so important.



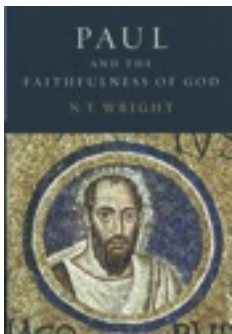
Three other books will be important for sections of the Corinthian letters:

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



Some of the key ideas I am beginning with are these:

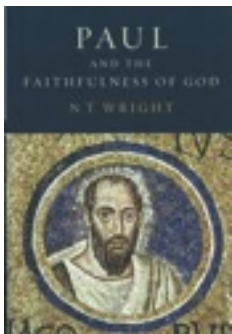
- building on one apostolic foundation
- rhetoric of the gospel—not based on orators
- systematic solving of issues that fractured the churches
- the church meeting anchored in the Lord's Supper as the unifying center
- the power of the New Covenant apostolic ministry
- the importance of apostolic leaders and their sphere of ministry—building a network



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

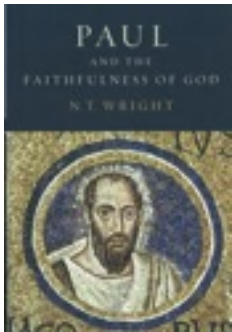


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

We have only two of them.

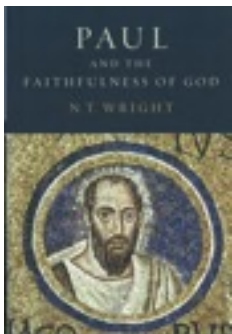




## Background

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

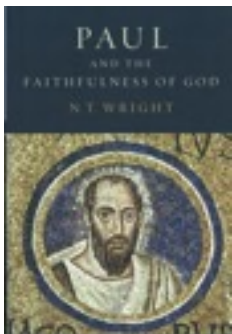
2 Corinthians 2:4 “Now I wrote to you in floods of tears, out of great trouble and anguish in my heart...” ??? N. T. Wright



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

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

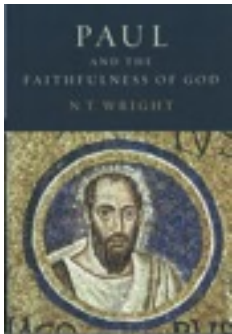
*The Making of Christianity: Beginning From Jerusalem*, by James G. D. Dunn, pg. 786



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

Let's begin by reading several passages from the two letters we have and then try to recreate Paul's intention in writing 1 and 2 Corinthians.



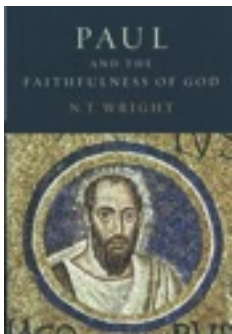
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>10</sup>Now I must appeal to you, my brothers and sisters, through the name of King Jesus our Lord, that you should all be in agreement, and that there should be no divisions among you. Instead, you should be fully equipped with the same mind and the same opinion.

<sup>11</sup>You see, my dear family, Chloe's people have put me in the picture about you— about the fact that you are having quarrels. <sup>12</sup>What I'm talking about is this. Each one of you is saying, "I'm with Paul!" "I'm with Apollos!" "I'm with Cephas!" "I'm with the Messiah!"

## 1 Corinthians 1:10–12

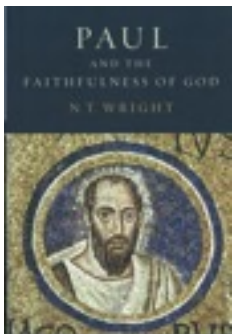


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>26</sup> Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

## 1 Corinthians 1:26–29



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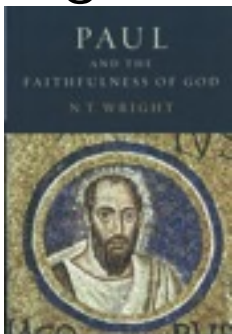
*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>14</sup> I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. <sup>15</sup> For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup> For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church. <sup>18</sup> But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant. <sup>19</sup> But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. <sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. <sup>21</sup> What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

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1 Corinthians 4:14–21 *Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>15</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; <sup>16</sup> I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people, and of everyone who works and toils with them. <sup>17</sup> I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; <sup>18</sup> for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give recognition to such persons. <sup>19</sup> The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. <sup>20</sup> All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.



## 1 Corinthians 16:15–20

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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<sup>23</sup> But I call on God as witness against me: it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. <sup>24</sup> I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith; rather, we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in the faith.

2:1 So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. <sup>2</sup> For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? <sup>3</sup> And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you. <sup>4</sup> For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

2 Corinthians 1:23–2:4

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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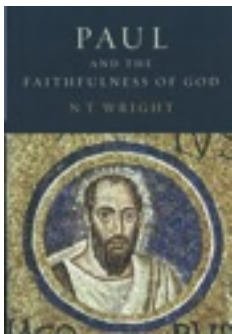


<sup>12</sup> When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; <sup>13</sup> but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia.... <sup>5</sup> For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way—disputes without and fears within. <sup>6</sup> But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus, <sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. <sup>8</sup> For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly.      2 Corinthians 2:12–13; 7:5–8

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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<sup>13</sup> We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you. <sup>14</sup> For we were not overstepping our limits when we reached you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the good news of Christ. <sup>15</sup> We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labors of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, <sup>16</sup> so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in someone else's sphere of action.



## 2 Corinthians 10:13–16

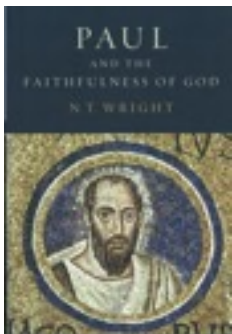
*Paul's Early Epistles*

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# Background

## Situating the Corinthian correspondence

- Paul lives with Aquila and Priscilla, same occupation, taught in synagogue
- Separates from synagogue, moves meetings to house of Titus Justus
- Paul moves on with Aquila and Priscilla to Ephesus and encounters Apollos, eloquent but untaught
- Paul writes first separation letter (1 Corinthians 5:9)
- The Corinthians write a community letter asking many questions around the separation issue.



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

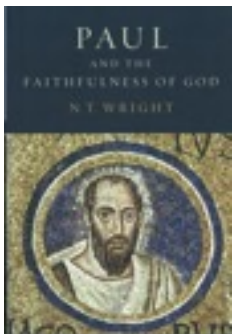
# Background

## Situating the Corinthian correspondence

- Paul writes 1 Corinthians
- New rival missionaries change the whole situation after writing 1 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 10–13)
- Paul wants to save his authority with an interim visit, but instead writes a tearful third letter from Ephesus, which again we do not have (2 Corinthians 2:1–5)
- After a time of imprisonment in Ephesus, Paul travels to Macedonia, skipping an open door for the gospel in Troas, where he meets Titus bringing good news about Corinth.

*Paul's Early Epistles*

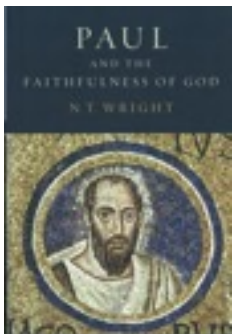
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# Background

## Situating the Corinthian correspondence

- Paul then writes a 4th letter, 2 Corinthians, setting the whole conflict with the Corinthians in context of his authority, network, and role in progressing the gospel.
- In the letters, Paul was regulating their community life, due to the fact that the community was mixed socially, creating factions, and that rival missionaries were accentuating the crisis.



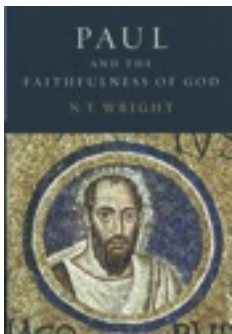
This background was built off of Theissen's work in *The Fortress Introduction to the New Testament*, pages

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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## Paul's intent

Paul is defending his role of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles, in the context of all sorts of rivals, keeping the Corinthian churches in his sphere of authority.



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

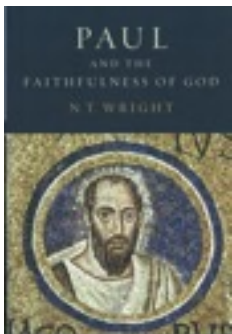
# Paul's Gospel

Three main points fill out our understanding about what it means to establish churches in the gospel:

1. It was Paul's job to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles, and he had to defend it against the confusions and attacks by other "so called" apostles.
2. The gospel had huge implications for the community life of the Corinthian churches, including how they met as churches.
3. Part of his sphere was also the strategy for the progress of the gospel, to assure that as the gospel progressed, all churches were in line with his proclamation of the gospel.

*Paul's Early Epistles*

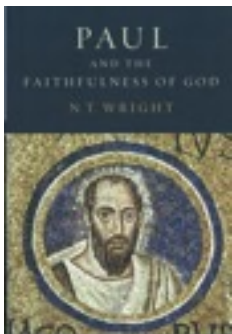
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# Theissen on 1 Corinthians

## Key observations

- The framework is the cross and the resurrection—he frames both in the gospel: 1:2–5 and 15:1–6.
- The cross (1:18ff) sets us all free— Paul aims at freeing Christians without losing their capacity to engage in dialogue with the environment.
- Paul sets another understanding of corporality: the whole person will be transformed.
- Christians must take seriously all that pertains to the body: sexuality (5:1–7:40), eating (8–11) and the tongue (14).

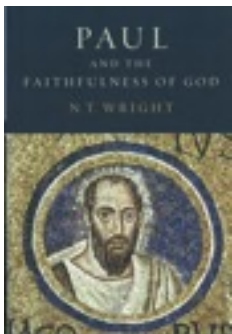




# Theissen on 2 Corinthians

## Key observations

- In 2 Corinthians, Paul develops his self-understanding as an Apostle in response to attacks by rival missionaries.
- Paul moves back and forth between authority and a sense of inferiority.
- Because of this nearness of Christ, Paul is convinced he will win over the community with his arguments, although he is working out his weaknesses.



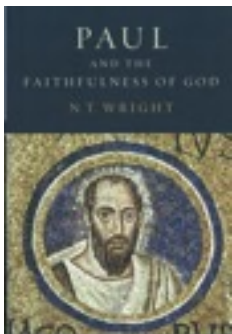
# Theissen on Social Setting

## Key issues

Who was Paul really fighting?

Initially, it was factions in the Corinthian churches — some who were resisting his authority and claiming to be following Peter or Apollos.

By 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, the itinerary charismatics were undermining Paul's authority amongst the churches.



# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

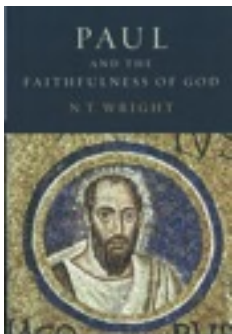
Theissen develops a very key idea: Itinerate charismatics vs. community organizers

The gospel spontaneously expanded through itinerate charismatics (temporary) but needed to be followed by community organizers (Paul's role); it was resisted by some as Paul exercised his apostolic authority.

Question: Is this a normative struggle in every generation as new movements emerge? Does this explain BILD in India?

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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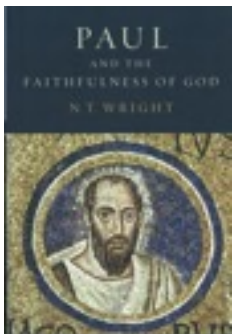


# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

How did Paul shape the movement? How did he use his authority? What does it take to bring the churches under the authority of Christ and His apostolic leadership?

Wow! Huge implications here in shaping church-planting movements in the “way of Christ and His Apostles!!!”



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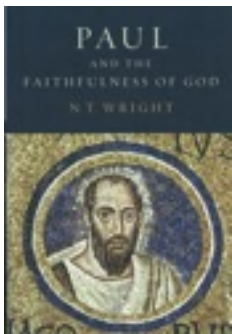
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

How did Paul shape the movement? How did he use his authority? What does it take to bring the churches under the authority of Christ and His apostolic leadership?

The power of his arguments in his letters over the power of the itinerate charismatics and the experiences they generated



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

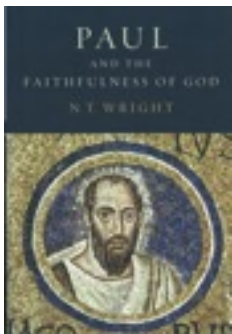
This explains the need in Global Pentecostalism today:

There are itinerate charismatics everywhere, who were part of the spontaneous expansion. Many are false apostles.

They must be followed by community organizers — like BILD — to bring the churches under the apostolic authority of the “way of Christ and His apostles”—primarily apostolic leaders exercising the authority of “Pauline theology.”

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

How did Paul shape the movement?

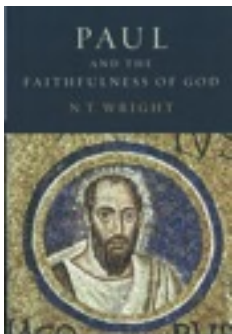
Primarily by building a strong team and a few larger, influential churches within the Corinthian churches:

Crispus

Gaius

Tertius

Stephanas



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

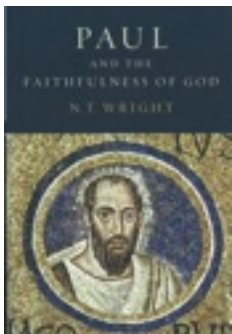
Key issues:

How did Paul shape the movement?

The congregation as a whole: not many

- wise (negative)
- powerful (negative)
- noble born (positive)

Noble = high social status (DNT), open-minded (DBL), less prejudice (ANLEX)



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*Paul's Early Epistles*



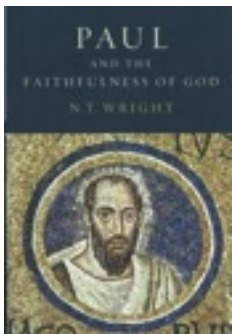
# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

How did Paul shape the movement?

Crispus—conversion of great significance, wealthy man, esteemed man, high social status (1 Cor. 1:14)

Erastus—city treasurer (city manager, 1 Cor. 4:1), travels with Paul. Paul sends him with Timothy via Macedonia to Corinth and Jerusalem (Acts 19:22)



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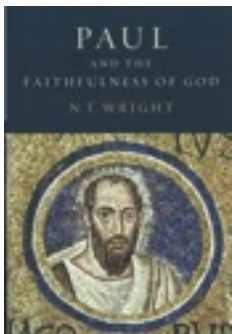
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

When all is said and done, we have a list of 16 names, apart from Chloe's people:

Achaicus  
Aquila  
Erastus  
Fortunatus  
Gaius  
Jason  
Crispus  
Lucias



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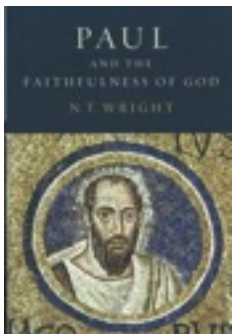
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

## Key issues

When all is said and done, we have a list of 16 names, apart from Chloe's people:

Priscilla  
Phoebe  
Quartus  
Sosipater  
Sosthenes  
Stephanas  
Titius Justus  
Tertius  
Chloe's people



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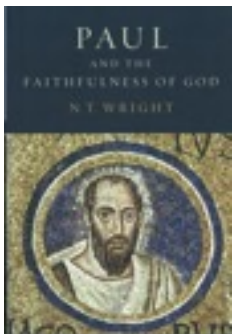
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

## Key issues

When all is said and done, we have a list of 16 names, apart from Chloe's people.

“The result is clear. The great majority of the Corinthians known to us by name probably enjoyed high social status.”



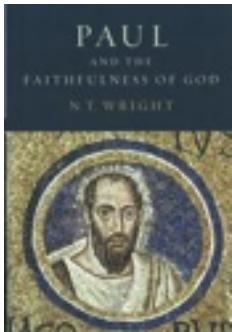
# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

When all is said and done, we have a list of 16 names, apart from Chloe's people.

Of the 17 people including Chloe's people, 3 services were rendered:

- houses
- services rendered
- travel

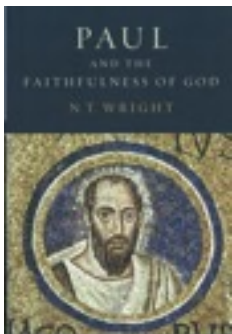


# Theissen on Social Setting

## Key issues

Of the 17 people including Chloe's people, 3 services were rendered:

- houses “Reference to someone's house is hardly a sure criteria for that person's high social status, but it is a probable one, particularly if other criteria point that direction” p. 87
- services rendered
- travel

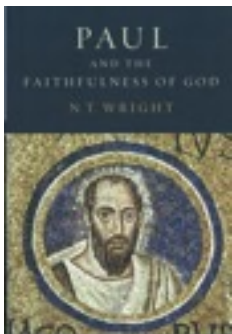


# Theissen on Social Setting

## Key issues

Of the 17 people including Chloe's people, 3 services were rendered:

- services rendered: supported Paul, housed him, housed a whole congregation, hosted included funding the gatherings, assumes helping Phoebe with her business in Rome while she was carrying out Paul's tasks
- travel



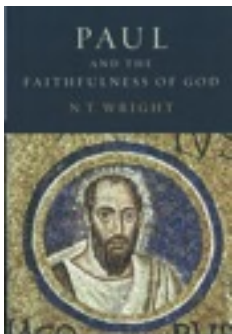
# Theissen on Social Setting

## Key issues

Of the 17 people including Chloe's people, 3 services were rendered:

- travel—of the 17 people mentioned, 9 engaged in travel, assumes helping Paul solve problems and build his network

See summary quote on page 95 of the 17 people



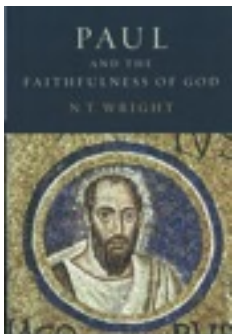


# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

How did Paul shape the movement?

Shaping social stratification through the church gathering and sacramental activity of the Lord's Supper



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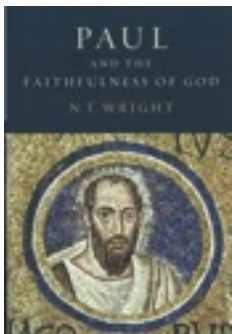
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

Shaping social stratification through the church gathering and sacramental activity of the Lord's Supper

- Wait for one another
- Proper meal occurs during the Lord's supper
- Not a special meal before for wealthy benefactors



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

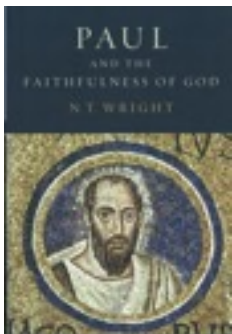
# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

Shaping social stratification through the church gathering and sacramental activity of the Lord's Supper

On one hand, in society remain as you are.

But in the church, you are one body, one family, equal, no social strata differences.



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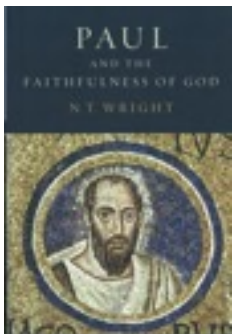
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

Statements about divisions in the church:

1. The Lord's supper
2. Material and financial achievements
3. Litigation
4. "Wisdom" and "knowledge"
5. Advice to slaves



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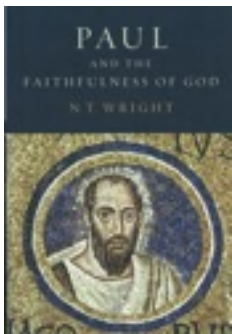
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Theissen on Social Setting

## Key issues

### Social structure of the city of Corinth

1. Corinthian citizens were on the rise economically, on a rapid economic upturn.
2. Corinthian wealth was based on trade.
3. Corinthian wealth, inseparable from commerce, was banking.
4. Governmental administration was an additional wealth factor.

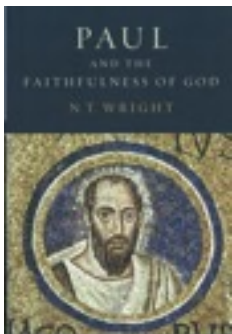


# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

## Social conditions of the Pauline mission

1. A majority of Corinthian Christians came from the lower strata.
2. Paul himself came from the upper strata—a citizen, educated, and he was relatively independent.



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

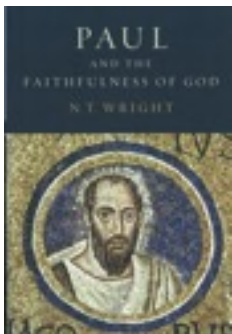
# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

Christianity's love–patriarchalism offered a realistic solution:

1. Each remained where they were in the social strata.
2. Gave the wealthy freedom to operate
3. All one in Christ
4. The lowly caste benefited

Is that an adequate solution for today?



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

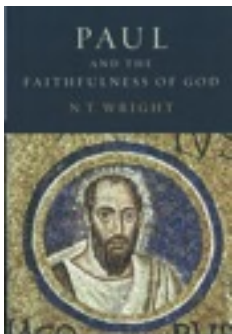
# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

The strong and the weak

The strong were the upper class who ate meat often.

The weak were the lower strata who saw meat as something special, only distributed on ceremonial occasions of some sort.



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

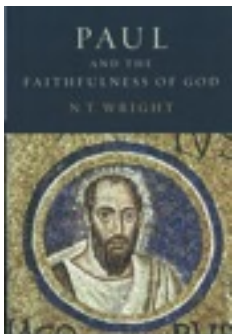


# Theissen on Social Setting

Key issues:

The strong and the weak

Most were harmless forms of sociability—  
“parties” of the ancient world



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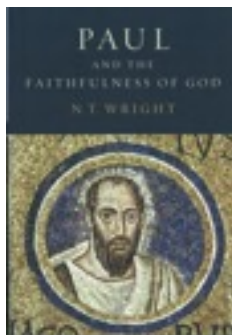
*Paul's Early Epistles*

# Intention Statement for the Corinthian Letters

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

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

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



# Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

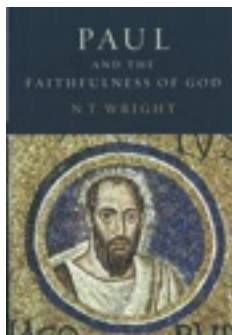
To deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches, with the view of the Corinthian churches fully participating with him in the progress of the gospel

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

by specifically addressing factions in both

- community life and
- community gatherings

by appealing to the future resurrection



# Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

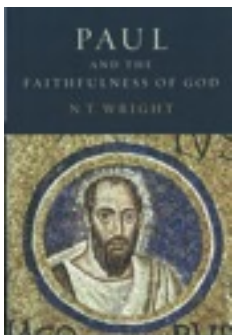
To defend his apostleship in the Corinthian churches, that they might remain in his sphere of authority and therefore participate fully in the progress amongst the Gentiles, for which he was uniquely commissioned by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship

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

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

*Paul's Early Epistles*

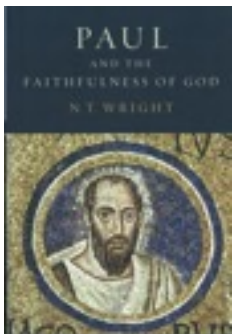
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# Issue: Building one-mindedness in churches today

## Questions:

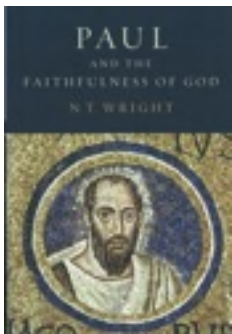
1. What sorts of divisions distract our churches from participating the process of the gospel?
2. What should leaders expect as they seek to progress the gospel through building networks of churches?
3. How can a church that is highly fractured be brought together in a one-minded fashion?
4. What role do apostolic leaders play today in bringing about the kind of one-mindedness Paul built into the Corinthian churches?



# How do we bring one-mindedness in churches and church networks today?

At least 5 things can be seen in how Paul worked with the Corinthians:

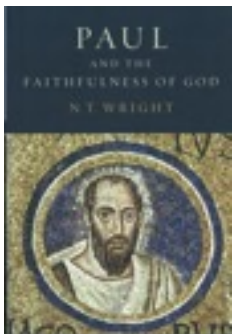
1. He worked tirelessly and genuinely fought for their loyalty to the gospel proclaimed (kerygma) and delivered to them, refusing to let them go a wrong direction.
2. He unpacked the teaching, dealing with their divisions with the teaching (didache—“to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church.” 1 Cor. 4:17) that he delivered to them, which was delivered to him by Christ.



# How do we bring one-mindedness in churches and church networks today?

At least 5 things can be seen in how Paul worked with the Corinthians:

3. He used his authority by confronting internal divisions directly—through letters, through his team, and through personal visits.
4. He built a very strong team of well-trained, highly influential leaders, whom he used to shape the Corinthian churches.
5. He gave them a sense that they were part of something much bigger than themselves, enabling the gospel to progress, empowering him to proclaim the gospel in new lands.



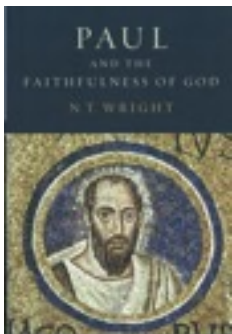
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

This is what we are experiencing today in our participation in the progress of the gospel worldwide

## Illustrations

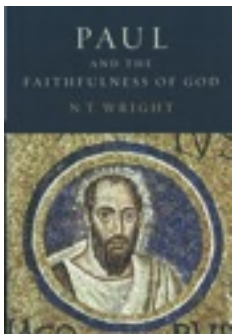
- Our own internal conflicts in bringing about a one-mindedness and building a strong apostolic team and a set of mature senior elders and emerging elders, deacons, and leading women (local)
- Little Rock churches (national)
- International—movements of churches working together based around the kerygma and the didache (i.e. Bijja Solomon); 60% of Pentecostals using materials, along with high church movements)





This is going to be a very exciting study.

It you work along with me, you will be able to master the argument as it unfolds and be able to participate in the study in a way that will introduce you to the theological method of using the 40-year growing conversation of Graeco-Roman research, which is reshaping our understanding of early Christianity and the intention of Paul's letters.



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*Paul's Early Epistles*