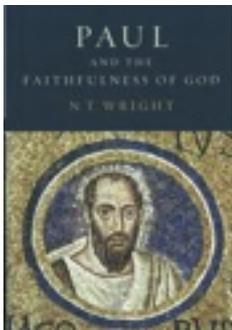


Last week we officially began our extensive series on the Corinthian correspondence.

This series is going to be very important in filling out our understanding of how Paul laid the foundation of the gospel for unity in his churches.

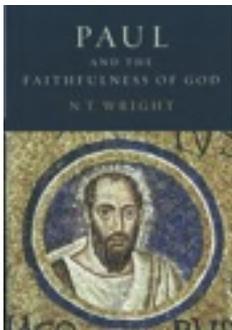
We will see its application to both unity in the Corinthian churches and unity in the network he was building, along with the tremendous cost he paid personally for laying that foundation.



Paul's Early Epistles

I was very disappointed in the first message itself, not in the building of the basic intention statement, but in structure of the validation, as it was a bit disorganized, and I was dead tired from just getting off the plane from a grueling trip to India and Africa.

I was thinking of polishing it and delivering it again, but decided I will do that when writing the session, because we cannot lose time if we are going to complete Paul's early letters this year—1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans—all very large and difficult letters.



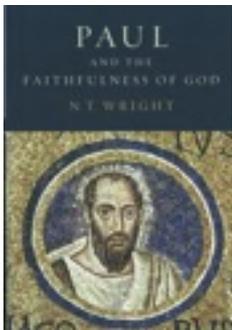
Paul's Early Epistles

Five 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.

Last week, in Session 1, we attempted to discover Paul’s intent in writing the Corinthian letters.

In this session, we will begin our focus on 1 Corinthians, and how Paul laid the foundation for dealing with their disunity by returning to the gospel.

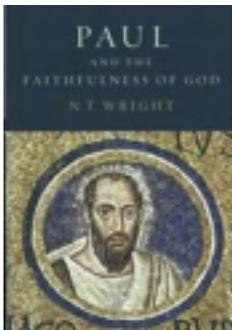


Paul's Early Epistles

Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:1–6:20

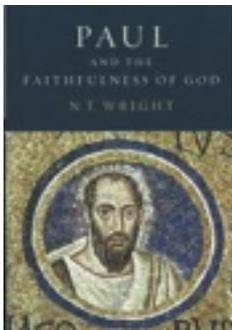
Questions:

1. How did Paul use the gospel to begin laying a foundation to solve the basic disunity in the Corinthian churches?
2. How did he contrast himself with those who were considered the most wise and powerful in the world?
3. How did he build unity at a basic level with those who said they were following one of the key leaders—Peter, Paul, Apollos, and some Christ?
4. How did Paul relate his call to building the right foundation, to affecting the investment of their lives in ministry?



Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

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



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

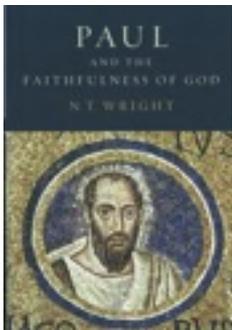
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

The Early Letters

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

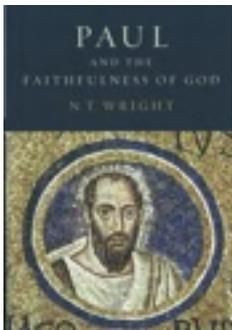
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

Book 3: The Thessalonian Correspondence: Conversion to the Gospel

Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

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

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



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Intent of The Early Letters

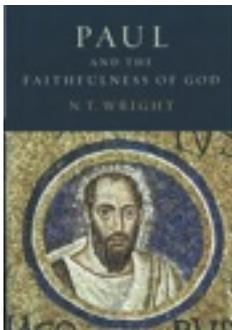
Session 2: The Galatian Problem

Session 3: The Thessalonian Conversion

Session 4: The Corinthian Schisms

Session 5: The Roman Treatise

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: The Galatian Problem

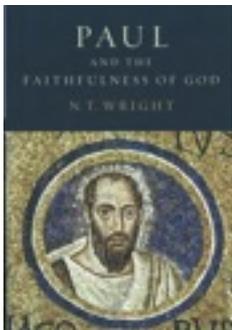
Session 2: The Pure Gospel

Session 3: The Gospel as a System of Living

Session 4: The Gospel and Walking in the Spirit

Session 5: The Gospel and Respecting Leaders

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

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

Session 1: Paul's Concern for the Thessalonians

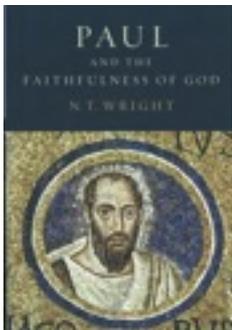
Session 2: Their Dramatic Conversion

Session 3: Three Emerging Problems—Letter 1

Session 4: Further Clarification—Letter 2

Session 5: Solidifying Their Conversion

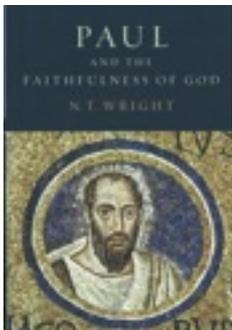
Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



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.



Paul's Early Epistles

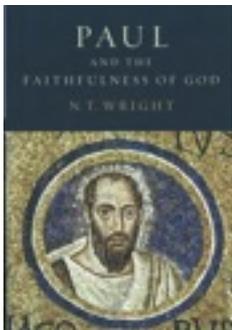
We will validate this in the six books of this series, as we look at the correspondence of these early letters:

The Galatian letter

The Thessalonian correspondence

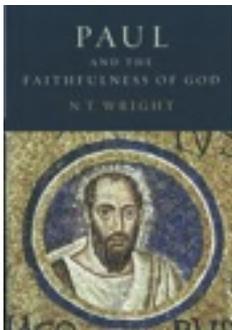
The Corinthian correspondence

The letter to the Romans



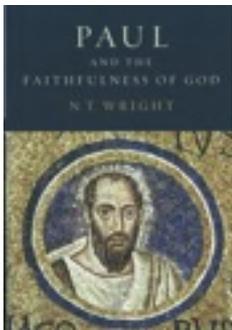
Paul's Early Epistles

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



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

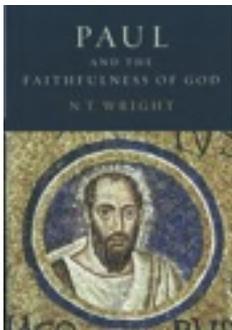
In addition, we will rely on a wealth of early Graeco–Roman research, as gathered by a set of scholars over the last 40 years, as we attempt to grasp the intention of these letters.



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.

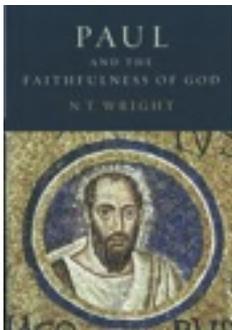


Paul's Early Epistles

Last week we relied heavily on Theissen’s work to build a fairly thorough “Graeco-Roman context” for laying a foundation for understanding the Corinthian problems.

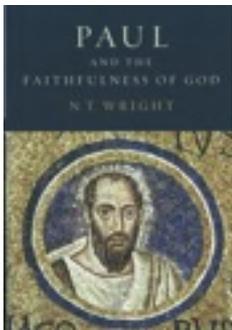
Theissen spent a lifetime in the Corinthian letters in his quest for the historical church.

This week we will build on that foundational research.



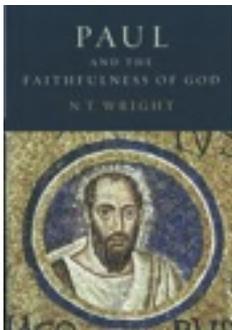
Paul's Early Epistles

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



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.

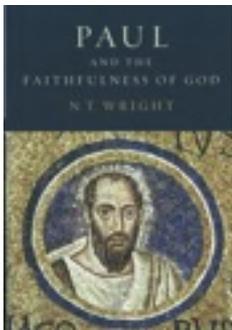
We have only two of them.



Background

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

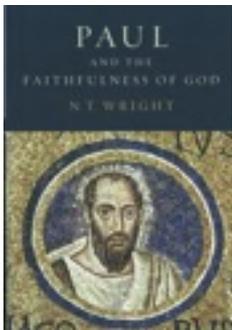
2 Corinthians 2:4 “Now I wrote to you in floods of tears, out of great trouble and anguish in my heart...” ??? N. T. Wright



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.”

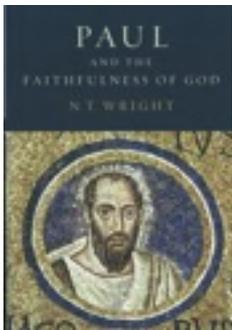
The Making of Christianity: Beginning From Jerusalem, by James G. D. Dunn, p. 786



Paul's Early Epistles

We then worked off several passages to build an initial intention statement for the entire Corinthian correspondence and for each of the letters:

- 1 Cor. 1:10–12
- 1 Cor. 1:26–29
- 1 Cor. 4:14–21
- 1 Cor. 16:15–20
- 2 Cor. 1:23–2:4
- 2 Cor. 2:12–13; 7:5–8
- 2 Cor. 10:13–16

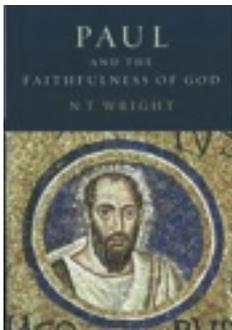


As a result, we built 3 intention statements

One for the entire Corinthian correspondence

One for 1 Corinthians

One for 2 Corinthians



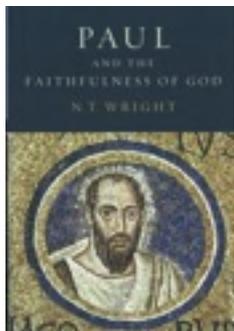
Paul's Early Epistles

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 continued to build a network of churches committed to progressing the gospel among the Gentiles

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

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



Paul's Early Epistles

Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

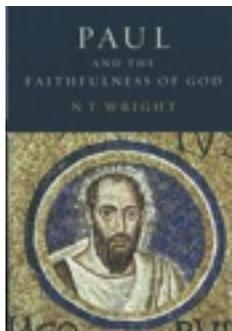
To deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches, with the view of the Corinthian churches fully participating with him in the progress of the gospel

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



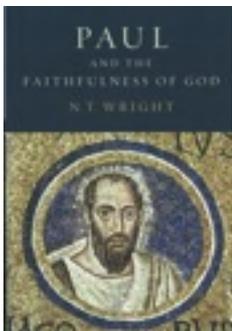
Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

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

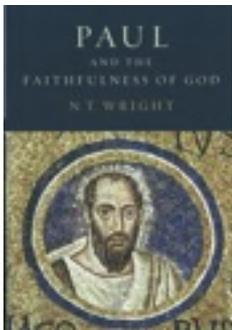


Paul's Gospel

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; as the gospel progressed, he needed to ensure that all churches were in line with his proclamation of the gospel.

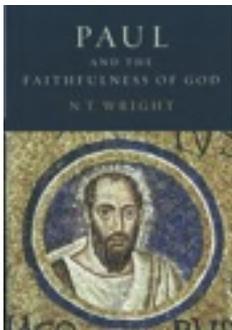
Paul's Early Epistles



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:

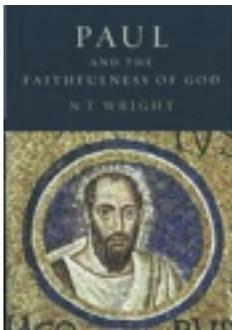
1. He worked tirelessly and genuinely fought for their loyalty to the gospel, proclaimed (kerygma) and delivered to them, refusing to let them go a wrong direction.
2. He unpacked the teaching (didache), dealing with their divisions with the teaching he delivered to them, which was delivered to him by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



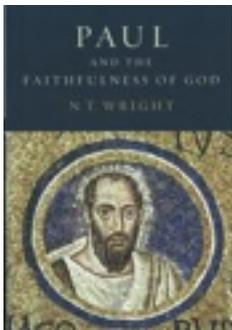
How do we bring one-mindedness in churches and church networks today?

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.



Now let's begin working through
the first section of 1 Corinthians—
1:1–6:20



Paul's Early Epistles

Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

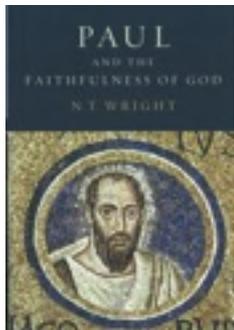
To deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches, with the view of the Corinthian churches fully participating with him in the progress of the gospel

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

by specifically addressing factions in both

- their community life and
- their community gatherings

by appealing to the future resurrection

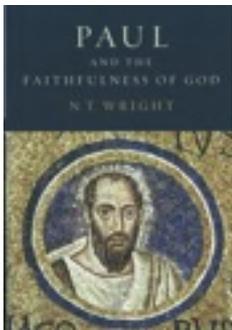


There were 3 types of community-wide divisions:

1. Divisions in marriage, chapter 7
2. Divisions in lifestyle, chapters 8–10
3. Divisions in men's and women's roles, chapter 11:1–16

There were 3 types of divisions in their community gatherings:

1. Divisions at the Lord's supper
2. Divisions in the order of gifts
3. Divisions in the meeting itself



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

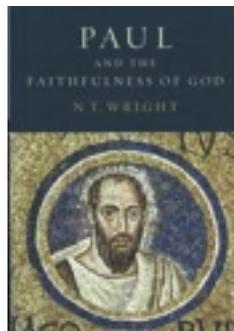
by applying the gospel to the core divisions that developed by factions within the churches 1:1–6:20

by specifically addressing factions in both

- their community life and
- their community gatherings

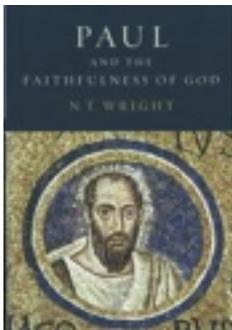
by appealing to the future resurrection

Paul's Early Epistles



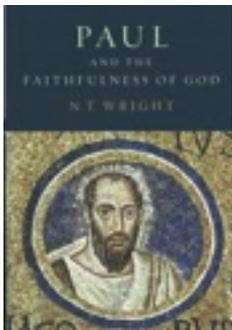
Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 1:1–6:20

- You embraced the gospel, have been given many gifts, and a great (a great platform)
- Yet you are divided following the leader who baptized you—Apollos, Peter and Paul, and some say they are following Christ alone.
- There is only one foundation—Christ; so build on that foundation, realizing that in the future you will even be judging angels.
- But you are not using those gifts and knowledge to judge major sin in your midst and by letting disputes among members to go to secular courts.



Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 1:1-6:20

- You are not building carefully on that foundation and must realize that if you fail to build correctly, you will lose your future reward.
- So follow me, embracing one gospel, which I laid down carefully and Apollos built upon.
- In building upon it, you must realize there is only one way to build on it— by following the teaching I delivered to you and which I deliver to all of the churches—the “ways of Christ” as I delivered them to you.



Even though Paul states “to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus (“the way of Christ and His Apostles”) as I teach them everywhere in every church,” 1 Corinthians 4:17, which refers to both the kerygma and didache, in this section he is only focusing on the gospel.

He uses 5 references to this gospel:

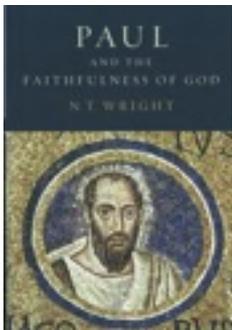
“the messianic message” 1:6

“for Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel” 1:17

“the message of the cross” 1:18

“but we proclaim Christ crucified” 1:23

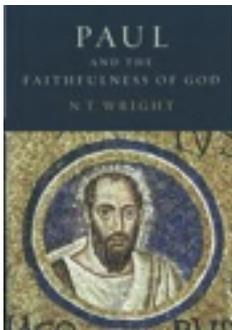
“in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel” 4:15



Now we will focus on 2 passages that bring this home to the Corinthians:

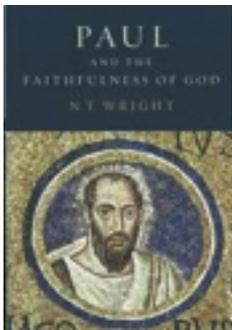
1 Corinthians 2:1–5: Paul describes the heart of his approach to the gospel in comparison to the arrogant reliance on superior camps within the Corinthian churches.

1 Corinthians 3:1–10: Paul focuses on the importance of building correctly on the foundation of the gospel he has laid.



2:1 This is how it was for me, too, my dear family. When I came to you, I didn't come and proclaim God's mystery to you by means of a superior style of speaking or wisdom. ²No: I decided to know nothing in my dealings with you except Jesus the Messiah, especially his crucifixion. ³I came to you in weakness, in great fear and trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in transparent proof brought home powerfully by the spirit, ⁵so that your faith might not be in human wisdom but in God's power.

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 N.T. Wright



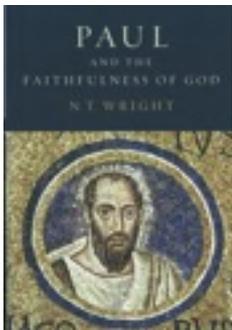
Paul's Early Epistles

1 Corinthians 2:1–5, Paul describes the heart of his approach to the gospel in comparison to the arrogant reliance on superior camps within the Corinthian churches.

- Paul did not come as one who figured it all out himself.
- Paul did not come as a polished orator.
- It was revealed to him by Christ through the Spirit.
- His mind was enlightened just as he described.

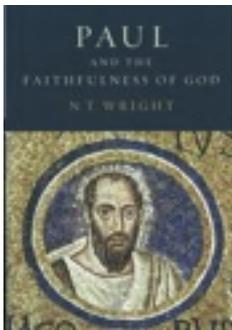
Note: Today even the simplicity of the gospel is often complicated and confused by professionally trained pastors who deliver it as professional orators on Sunday mornings

Paul's Early Epistles



15:1 Let me remind you, brothers and sisters, about the good news which I announced to you. You received this good news, and you're standing firm on it, ²and you are saved through it, if you hold fast the message I announced to you— unless it was for nothing that you believed!

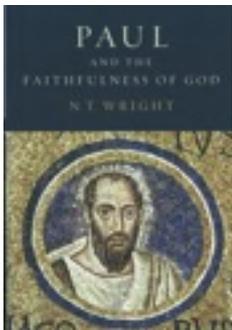
1 Corinthians 15:1–2 N.T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

³What I handed on to you at the beginning, you see, was what I received, namely this: “The Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Bible; ⁴he was buried; he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Bible; ⁵he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve; ⁶then he was seen by over five hundred brothers and sisters at once, most of whom are still with us, though some fell asleep; ⁷then he was seen by James, then by all the apostles; ⁸and, last of all, as to one ripped from the womb, he appeared even to me.”

1 Corinthians 15:3–7 N.T. Wright

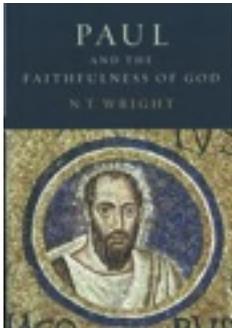


Paul's Early Epistles

In this passage, Paul makes it clear that the gospel he proclaimed to them, again, was not his great discovery because of his great wisdom, but that it was passed down to him just as he passed it on to them.

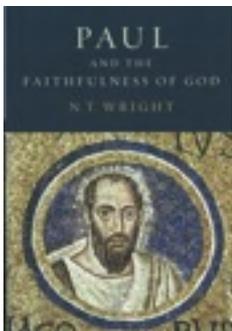
Then he gives the gospel in sort of a formulaic style, which we call the kerygma. This began in Peter's 5 sermons as we studied previously in *The First Principles* and *The Story*.

We will come back to this in session 5 of this study.



Paul's Early Epistles

3:1 In my own case, my dear family, I couldn't speak to you as spiritual people, but as people who were all too obviously merely human, little babies in the Messiah. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, because you weren't able to take it—and you still can't, even now! ³You're still determined to live in the old way! Yes, wherever there is jealousy and quarreling, doesn't that mean you're living in the old way, behaving as any merely human being might do? ⁴When someone says "I'm with Paul!" and someone else says "I'm with Apollos!" are you not mere humans?



1 Corinthians 3:1–4 N.T. Wright

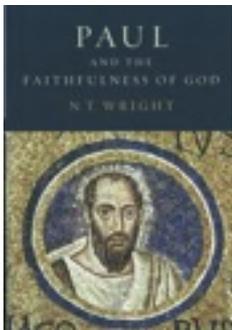
Paul's Early Epistles

⁵So what d'you suppose Apollos actually is? What d'you think Paul is? I'll tell you: servants, through whom you came to faith, each one as the Lord gave. ⁶I planted and Apollos watered, but it was God who gave the growth. ⁷It follows that the person who plants isn't anything special, and the person who waters isn't anything special; what matters is God who gives the growth. ⁸The person who plants and the person who waters are just the same, and each will receive his own reward according to his own work. ⁹We are God's fellow workers, you see: you are God's farm, God's building. ¹⁰According to God's grace, I laid the foundation like a wise master builder, and someone else is building on it. Everyone should take care how they build on it. ¹¹Nobody can lay any foundation, you see, except the one which is laid, which is Jesus the Messiah!

1 Corinthians 3:5–11 N.T. Wright

¹²If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, or straw— ¹³well, everyone's work will become visible, because the Day will show it up, since it will be revealed in fire. Then the fire will test what sort of work everyone has done. ¹⁴If the building work that someone has done stands the test, they will receive a reward. ¹⁵If someone's work is burned up, they will be punished by bearing the loss; they themselves will be saved, however, but only as though through a fire.

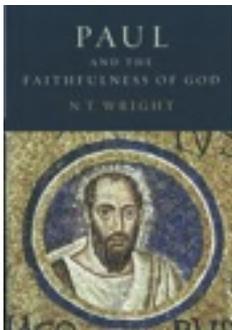
1 Corinthians 3:12–15 N.T. Wright



Paul's Early Epistles

This passage summarizes what Paul wants them to understand in the entire section 1:1–5:20:

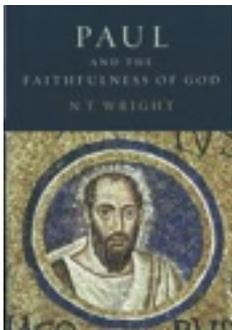
- They are like “little babies” in Christ, evidenced by their quarreling and claiming to be better than others by claiming to follow a leader — Paul or Apollos.
- Paul planted (laid the foundation—the gospel), Apollos watered (built upon it with teaching), and God causes the growth, so they are really nothing.
- The one who builds on the right foundation will receive rewards for the work of their lives, but those who build on the wrong foundation will see all their work burned up instead of receiving eternal rewards.



He is laying out the core solution to the quarrels and divisions they have set up.

While he works toward unity by acknowledging the teaching work of Apollos, and I'm sure he did value it, he makes it clear that he is the one who is responsible to bring them the official teaching (didache).

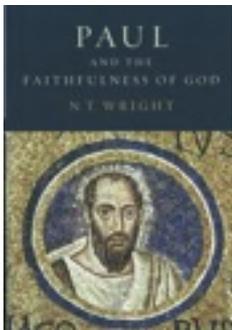
Remember they are to imitate him and follow his teaching delivered to the churches — the way of Christ and His apostles.



Issue: The foundation—unity based in the gospel

Questions:

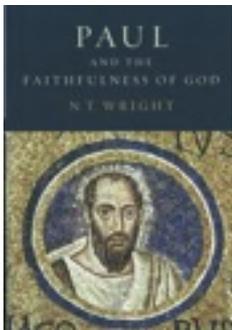
1. In what way does the gospel lay a foundation for unity in our churches today?
2. Why is it so critical that this is embraced by everyone in all of our churches?
3. What does it mean to lay the foundation and then to water it carefully? to build on it accurately?
4. What would that look like today in our churches?
Can we be sure we are accurately building on that one gospel foundation ?



Paul's Early Epistles

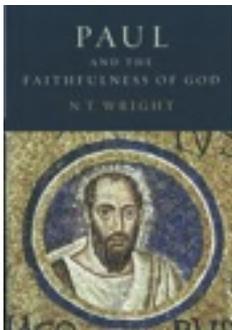
Core applications

1. The gospel (the kerygma, the gospel proclaimed), must be clearly embraced by all as one foundation—the same gospel passed down to Paul in formulaic statement form.
2. It must be built upon following “the way of Christ and His Apostles,” which was fully articulated by Paul—what he calls the traditions delivered to all the churches.



Core applications

3. The gospel should be presented in its simplicity, as proclaimed by Paul, not in a complicated fashion by orators claiming a unique, academic, professional insight.
4. If we are not solid in the kerygma and didache as established by Paul, which are the ways of Jesus, then we are at risk of entirely wasting our lives and having all our labors in ministry “go up in smoke” at the end of our lives.

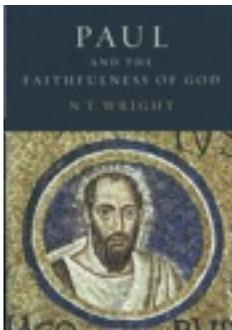


Implications for churches today:

If we fail to build on the right foundations, our churches will fragment, and we will become useless to the progress of the gospel and labor in vain.

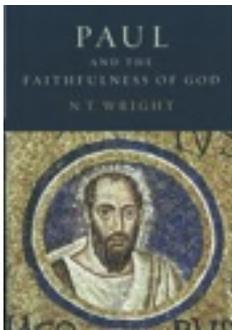
If we fail to build on the right foundation, then we risk wasting our lives, rendering our ministry ineffective.

If we build on the wrong foundation, then we will enter the fulness of the kingdom by the skin of our teeth.



As I said at the beginning, 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.



Paul's Early Epistles