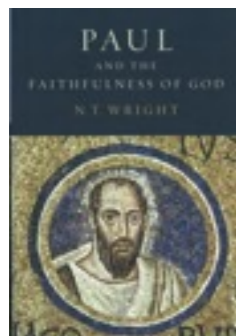


This morning we will continue our series on Paul's early letters. Paul's early letters all focused on establishing his young churches in the gospel.

We finished 1 Corinthians and last session we turned our attention to 2 Corinthians.

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

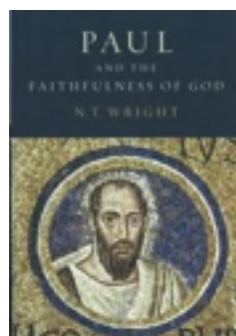
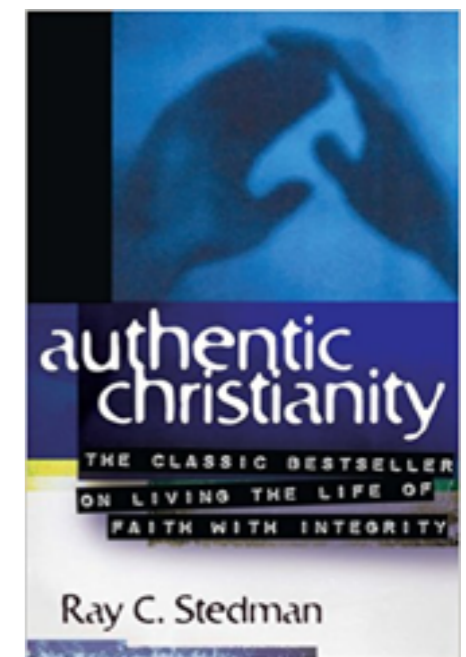
Why would he devote a large letter to his relationship with the Corinthians? We will continue addressing this issue this morning.



Specifically, this morning, we are going to focus on 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5

It is a very special passage. We have a course on it in BILD's Leadership Series I: *Ministry Perspectives: Conflicts Without and Fears Within*.

Again, I was shaped profoundly in my thinking by a Ray Stedman book: *Authentic Christianity* (1973), which is basically completely built around 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5. (\$9.99 on Kindle: 2 espressos—go cold turkey for one day and buy it.)



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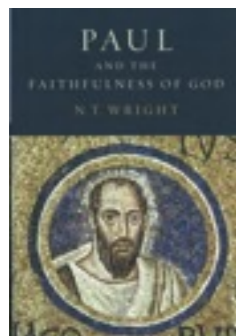
*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>12</sup> However, when I came to Troas to announce the Messiah's gospel, and found an open door waiting for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup> I couldn't get any quietness in my spirit because I didn't find my brother Titus there. So I left them and went off to Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 2:12–13 N. T. Wright

<sup>5</sup> You see, even when we arrived in Macedonia, we couldn't relax or rest. We were troubled in every way; there were battles outside and fears inside.

2 Corinthians 7:5 N. T. Wright



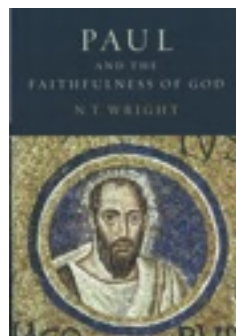
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

Passage: 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5

Questions:

1. How would you describe Paul's perspective on "success" in his ministry?
2. What were his standards for measuring success in his ministry?
3. If he had a correct perspective of success in ministry, why was he at times so discouraged, even depressed, and why did he feel so much pressure?
4. What is the relationship of "conflicts without and fears within" to the true success of his ministry?



# The Early Letters

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

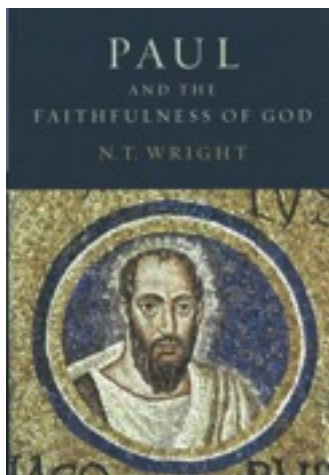
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

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

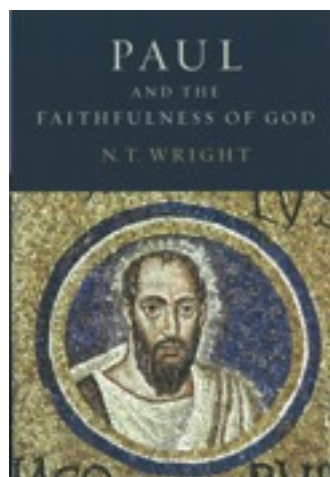
Session 2: The Galatian Problem

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

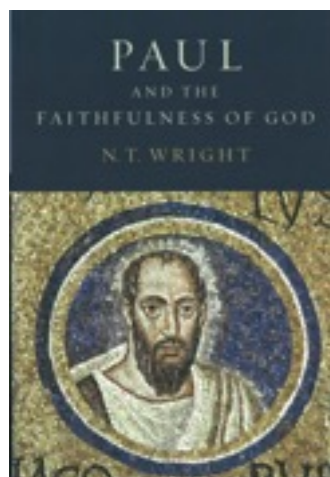
Session 2: The Pure Gospel

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

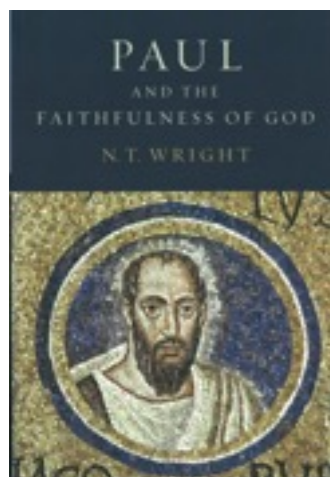
Session 2: Their Dramatic Conversion

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



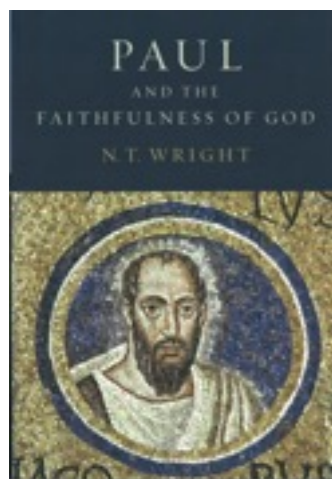
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*Paul's Early Epistles*



# 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



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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

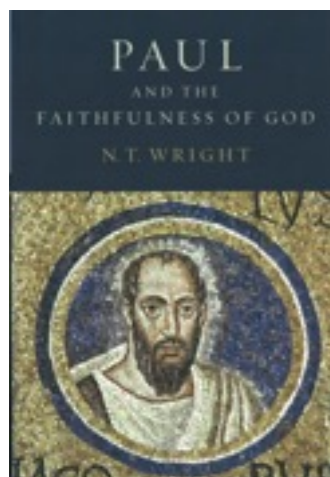
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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



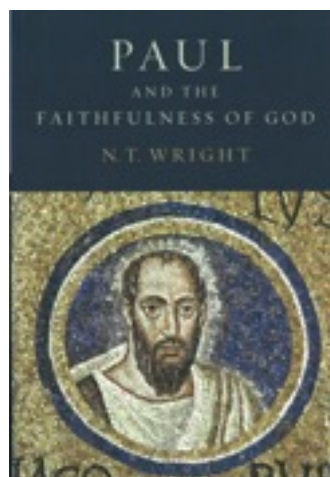
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

Paul broadens the understanding of the gospel, and 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*

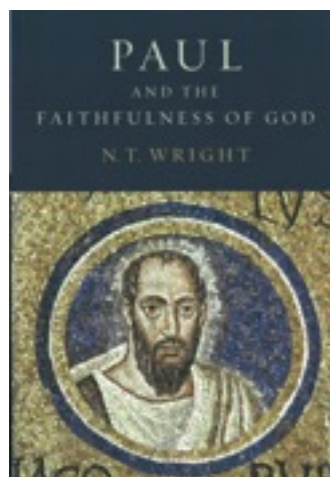
We will validate this in the six books of this series, as we look at the correspondence of these early letters:

The Galatian letter

The Thessalonian correspondence

The Corinthian correspondence (2)

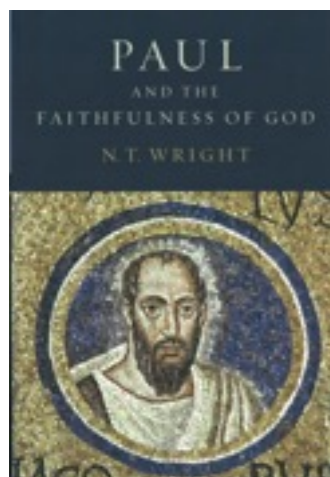
The letter to the Romans



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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.

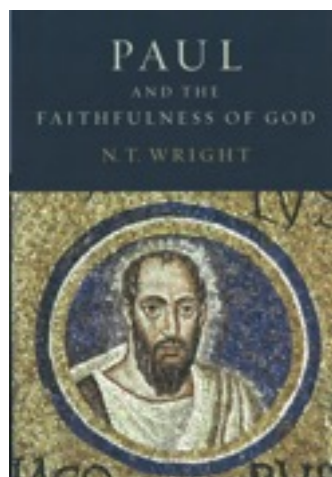


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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

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



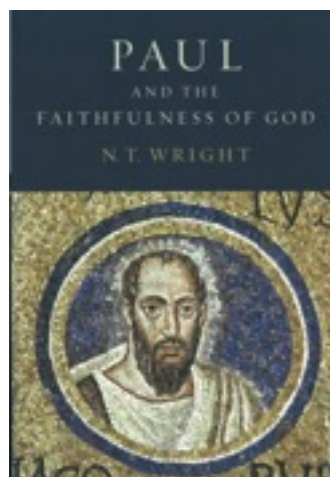
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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.

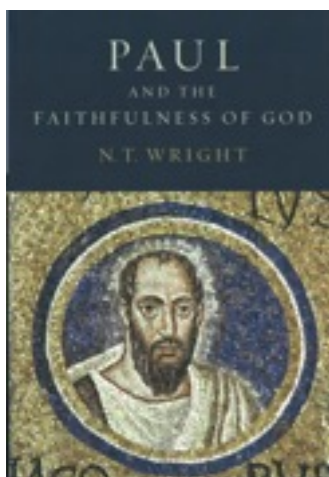


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

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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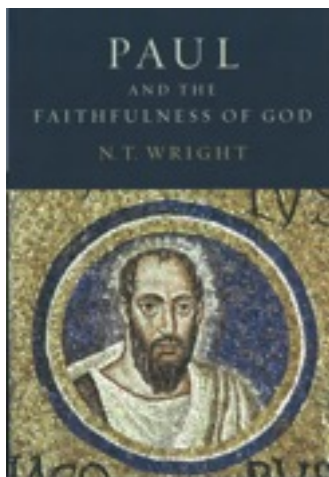
*Paul's Early Epistles*



Two books contribute to getting on top of the conversation:

*Beginning From Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making, Volume 2*, 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.



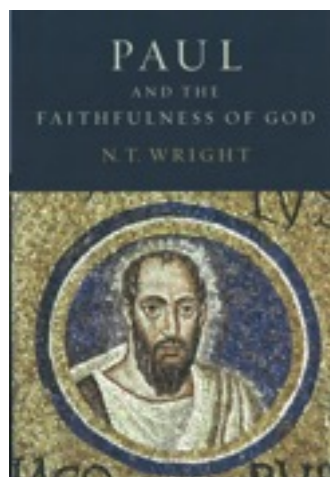
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

The second book that contributes to getting on top of the conversation is:

*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*

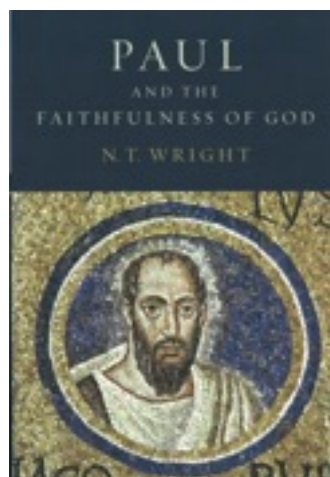
# Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

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

by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship.

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

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



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

## Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

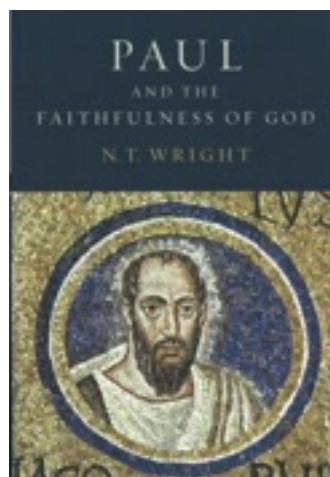
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



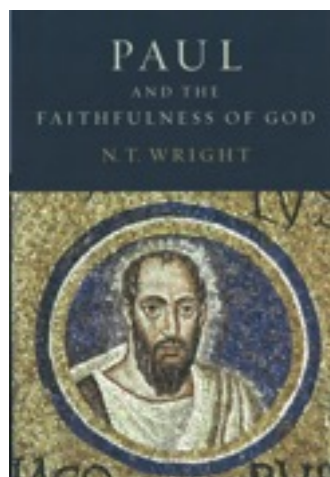
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

Last session we looked at 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:11, which served as an introduction, enabling an understanding of Paul’s intention in writing the letters.

It set a framework for understanding Paul’s philosophy of ministry.

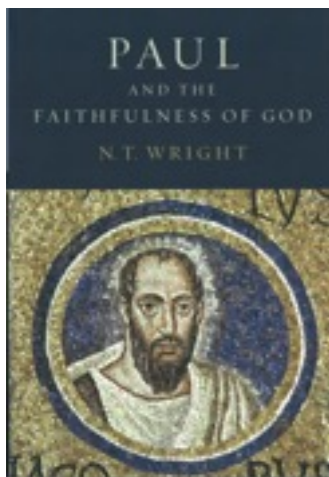
We concluded the following . . .



Our entire philosophy of ministry will be shaped as this letter unfolds.

## Philosophy of ministry

- what it takes to establish churches in the gospel
- what kinds of battles to expect
- the personal commitment of leaders, the expected toll on leaders
- how to think about what success really is
- how we can know if a church is established in the gospel
- how leaders bring about change in churches
- what it means for leaders to exercise authority in and amongst churches



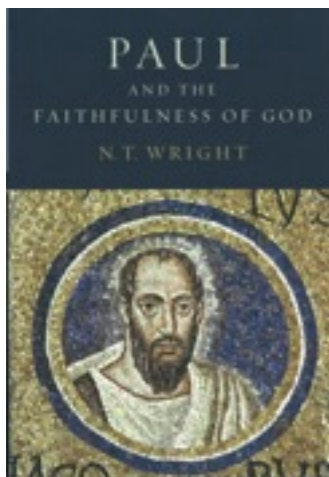
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

# What do we learn so far about Paul's philosophy?

## Paul's Philosophy of ministry:

- If we are not fully engaged in the progress of the gospel beyond our own sphere, we are not established in the gospel.
- Getting a church founded will involve a significant amount of strong leadership and confrontation.
- Progress of the gospel is very demanding, and it demands churches that fully participate in that expansion.
- Those on the front lines should expect constant pressure, deep discouragement, and a lot of criticism.
- Apostolic leaders must be able to make convincing, authoritative arguments to defend their authority, teaching, and ministry sphere.



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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

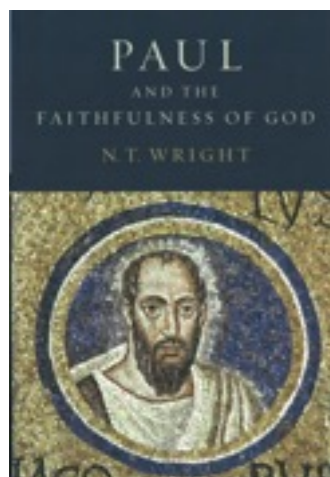
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

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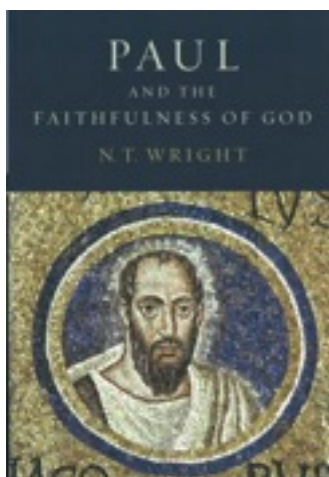
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*Paul's Early Epistles*



This session we will focus on 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5.

Here Paul unfolds his perspective of ministry in the context of all his external conflicts and internal fears, which will enable us to see clearly what real success in ministry is.

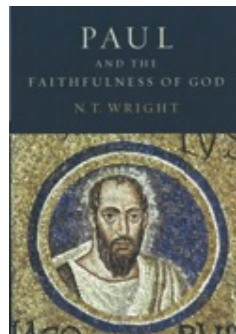


<sup>12</sup> However, when I came to Troas to announce the Messiah's gospel, and found an open door waiting for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup> I couldn't get any quietness in my spirit because I didn't find my brother Titus there. So I left them and went off to Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 2:12–13 N. T. Wright

<sup>5</sup> You see, even when we arrived in Macedonia, we couldn't relax or rest. We were troubled in every way; there were battles outside and fears inside.

2 Corinthians 7:5 N. T. Wright



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

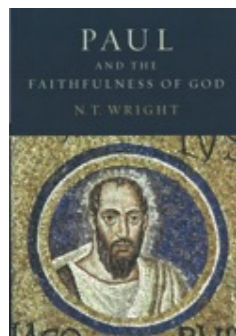
From a literary standpoint, Paul frames in his argument on his perspective of ministry. How does he think about his ministry in the context of all the conflicts and internal fears?

He unfolds a well thought out, deeply theological personal perspective of ministry.

2:12–13 He leaves a wide open door for the gospel.

7:5 He arrives in Macedonia.

In between these verses, he unfolds his deeply thought through perspective.



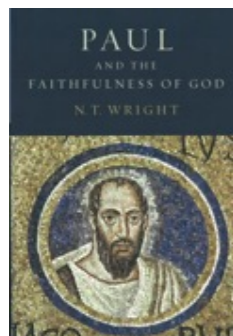
Why did he leave the wide open door for the gospel?

Because he had “no rest in his spirit”

rest = relaxation of tension

Titus was supposed to meet him there. He was supposed to bring news of how the Corinthians responded to his letter.

In 2 Corinthians 7:5, he still has *no rest*—the same word—only here he says their “bodies had no rest.”



Then he summarizes his situation:

“We were troubled in every way; there were battles outside and fears inside.”

“troubled” = squeezed, under great pressure, crushed (LN), restricted (BGD)

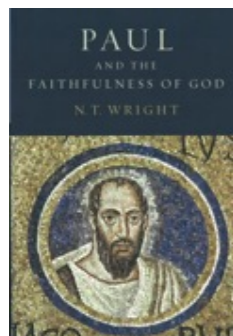
“battles outside”—combat, severe clashes, fights (LN), contention, strife (LEH LXX)

“fears inside”—anxiety (LK), panic, flight (LSJ)—the greek word is phobos

Paul was in a constant state of anxiety: zapping all his resources internally and externally, restricting him and all effective progress of the gospel.

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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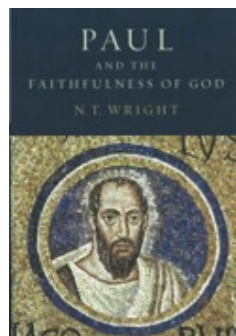


He doesn't get any relief until Titus comes.

<sup>6</sup>But the God who comforts the downcast comforted us by the arrival of Titus, <sup>7</sup>and not only by his arrival but in the comfort he had received from you, as he told us about your longing for us, your lamenting, and your enthusiasm for me personally.

2 Corinthians 7:6–7 N. T. Wright

In 7:6–16 he expresses he was sorry for the harshness, but happy for their responses, and it was so strong that he expressed he now had full confidence in them.



We will now look at what was going on in him on his journey from Troas to Macedonia.

In the crucible of all this pressure, he forms his “theology on the perspective of the ministry” he had been called to.

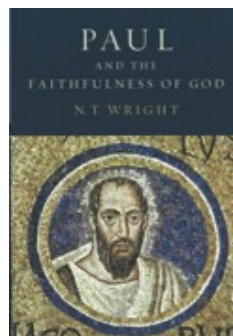
It is important to note, at this point though, that thinking right did not relieve the pressure—the toll on him mentally and physically—it just kept him in the battle and fulfilling his calling!!!!

If we are not in the battle and experiencing similar ministry realities, then maybe we are not in the battle.

Here, now, is Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his view of success, 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5.

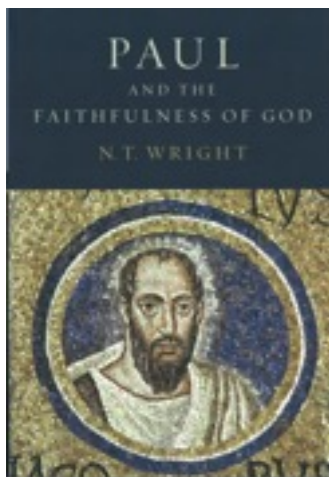
*Paul’s Early Epistles*

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Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5).

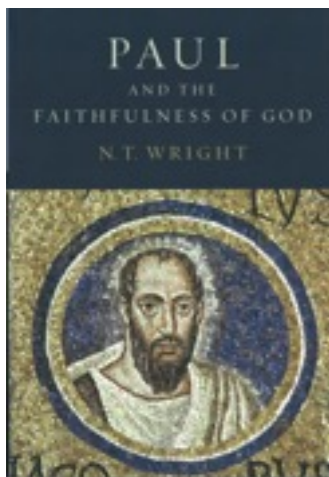
1. Ministry is a “triumphal march” like the returning Roman army with its captives and spoils. The results were that some died and some lived. Specifically, in Christ’s triumphal unfolding plan for progressing the gospel and building the kingdom through His church, Paul’s ministry would lead some closer to life and some closer to death. Christ’s triumphal march will always be filled with conflict. 2 Corinthians 2:14–17.





<sup>14</sup>But thanks be to God—the God who always leads us in his triumphal procession in the Messiah, and through us reveals everywhere the sweet smell of knowing him. <sup>15</sup>We are the Messiah’s fragrance before God, you see, to those who are being saved and to those who are being lost. <sup>16</sup>To the latter, it’s a smell which comes from death and leads to death; but to the former it’s the smell of life which leads to life. Who can rise to this challenge? <sup>17</sup>We aren’t mere peddlers of God’s word, as so many people are. We speak with sincerity; we speak from God; we speak in God’s presence; we speak in the Messiah.

2 Corinthians 2:14–17



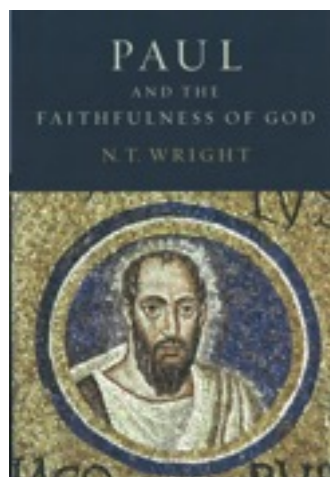
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5):

2. Paul is qualified as a steward of the New Covenant, in which the Spirit writes His word on the hearts of those who believe, and everyone can see it (not as Moses veiled his face to hide the glory from the old covenant on tablets of stone). Now the glory through the Spirit is inside us (the glory of the Lord) and transforming us from glory to glory.

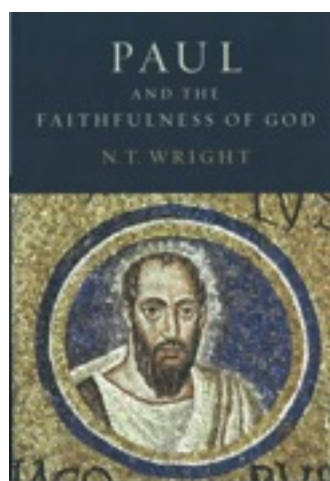
2 Corinthians 3:1–18



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>1</sup> So: we're starting to "recommend ourselves" again, are we? Or perhaps we need—as some do—official references to give to you? Or perhaps even to get from you? <sup>2</sup>You are our official reference! It's written on our hearts! Everybody can know it and read it! <sup>3</sup>It's quite plain that you are a letter from the Messiah, with us as the messengers—a letter not written with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on the tablets of beating hearts. <sup>4</sup>That's the kind of confidence we have toward God, through the Messiah. <sup>5</sup>It isn't as though we are qualified in ourselves to reckon that we have anything to offer on our own account. Our qualification comes from God: <sup>6</sup>God has qualified us to be stewards of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit. The letter kills, you see, but the spirit gives life.

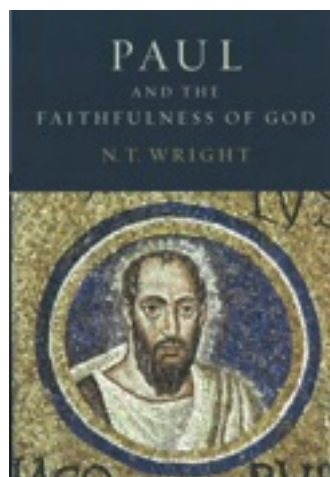


2 Corinthians 3:1–6 N. T. Wright

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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<sup>7</sup>But just think about it: when death was being distributed, carved in letters of stone, it was a glorious thing, so glorious in fact that the children of Israel couldn't look at Moses's face because of the glory of his face—a glory that was to be abolished. <sup>8</sup>But in that case, when the spirit is being distributed, won't that be glorious too? <sup>9</sup>If distributing condemnation is glorious, you see, how much more glorious is it to distribute vindication! <sup>10</sup>In fact, what used to be glorious has come in this respect to have no glory at all, because of the new glory which goes so far beyond it. <sup>11</sup>For if the thing which was to be abolished came with glory, how much more glory will there be for the thing that lasts.



2 Corinthians 3:7–11 N. T. Wright

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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<sup>12</sup>So, because that's the kind of hope we have, we speak with great freedom. <sup>13</sup>We aren't like Moses: he put a veil over his face, to stop the children of Israel from gazing at the end of what was being abolished. <sup>14</sup>The difference is that their minds were hardened. You see, the same veil lies over the reading of the old covenant right up to this very day. It isn't taken away, because it's in the Messiah that it is abolished. <sup>15</sup>Yes, even to this day, whenever Moses is read, the veil lies upon their hearts; <sup>16</sup>but "whenever he turns back to the Lord, the veil is removed." <sup>17</sup>Now "the Lord" here means the spirit; and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup>And all of us, without any veil on our faces, gaze at the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, and so are being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as you'd expect from the Lord, the spirit.

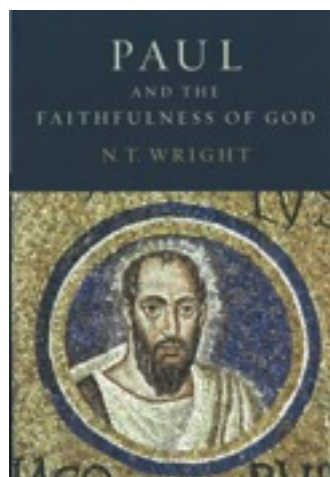
2 Corinthians 3:12–18 N. T. Wright  
*Paul's Early Epistles*

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Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5):

3. Paul did not lose heart because he saw himself as a simple clay pot filled with glory, which when under all kinds of pressure, the cracks allowed the light to get out, so others could see (except those who were perishing); the entire process of his outer man decaying was producing inner renewal day by day and an eternal weight of glory.

2 Corinthians 4:1–17

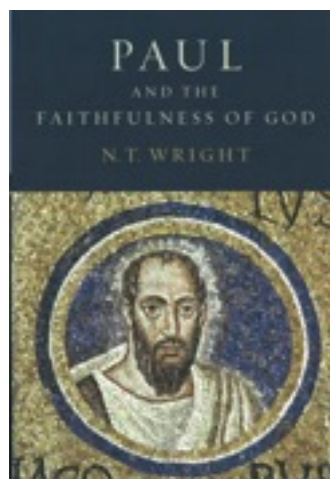


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>1</sup> For this reason, since we have this work entrusted to us in accordance with the mercy we have received, we don't lose heart. <sup>2</sup>On the contrary, we have renounced the secret things that make people ashamed. We don't use tricks; we don't falsify God's word. Rather, we speak the truth openly, and recommend ourselves to everybody's conscience in the presence of God. <sup>3</sup>However, if our gospel still remains "veiled," it is veiled for people who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>What's happening there is that the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they won't see the light of the gospel of the glory of the Messiah, who is God's image. <sup>5</sup>We don't proclaim ourselves, you see, but Jesus the Messiah as Lord, and ourselves as your servants because of Jesus; <sup>6</sup>because the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts, to produce the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus the Messiah.

<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in earthenware pots, so that the extraordinary quality of the power may belong to God, not to us. <sup>8</sup>We are under all kinds of pressure, but we are not crushed completely; we are at a loss, but not at our wits' end; <sup>9</sup>we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are cast down, but not destroyed. <sup>10</sup>We always carry the deadness of Jesus about in the body, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body. <sup>11</sup>Although we are still alive, you see, we are always being given over to death because of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal humanity. <sup>12</sup>So this is how it is: death is at work in us— but life in you!



2 Corinthians 4:7–12 N. T. Wright

*Paul's Early Epistles*

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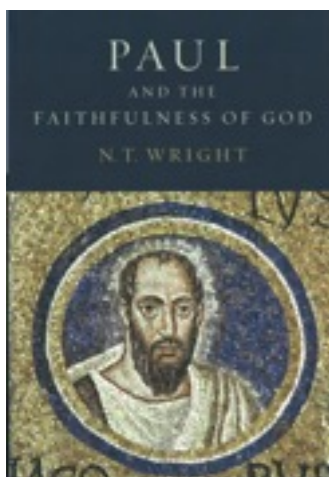
<sup>13</sup>We have the same spirit of faith as you see in what is written: “I believed, and so I spoke.” We too believe, and so we speak, <sup>14</sup>because we know that the God who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us with Jesus and present us with you. <sup>15</sup>It’s all because of you, you see! The aim is that, as grace abounds through the thanksgiving of more and more people, it will overflow to God’s glory. <sup>16</sup>For this reason we don’t lose heart. Even if our outer humanity is decaying, our inner humanity is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>This slight momentary trouble of ours is working to produce a weight of glory, passing and surpassing everything, lasting forever; <sup>18</sup>for we don’t look at the things that can be seen, but at the things that can’t be seen. After all, the things you can see are here today and gone tomorrow; but the things you can’t see are everlasting.

2 Corinthians 4:13–18 N. T. Wright

Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5):

4. Paul knew he was going to be given a new body to match his new inner man and that he would have to give account for his ministry at the judgment seat of Christ. So the love of Christ for him motivated him to press on as an ambassador for Christ and recognize that all who believed are new creations in process and need to be seen as not merely humans.

2 Corinthians 5:1–21

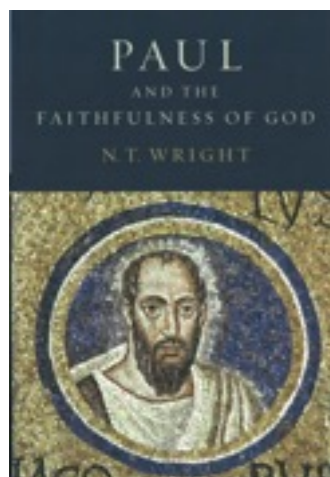


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>1</sup> For we know that if our earthly house, our present “tent,” is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house no human hands have built: it is everlasting, in the heavenly places. <sup>2</sup>At the present moment, you see, we are groaning, as we long to put on our heavenly building, <sup>3</sup>in the belief that by putting it on we won’t turn out to be naked. <sup>4</sup>Yes: in the present “tent,” we groan under a great weight. But we don’t want to put it off; we want to put on something else on top, so that what is doomed to die may be swallowed up with life. <sup>5</sup>It is God who has been at work in us to do this, the God who has given us the spirit as the first installment and guarantee.

2 Corinthians 5:1–5 N. T. Wright

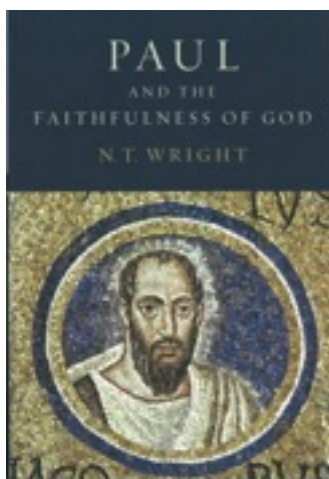


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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>6</sup>So we are always confident: we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. <sup>7</sup>We live our lives by faith, you see, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>We are confident, and we would much prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>So we work hard, as a point of honor, to please him, whether we are at home or away. <sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of the Messiah, so that each may receive what has been done through the body, whether good or bad.

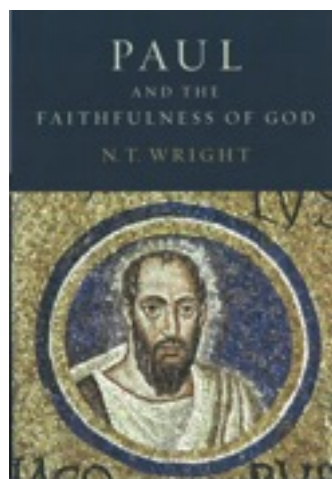
2 Corinthians 5:6–10 N. T. Wright



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>11</sup>So we know the fear of the Lord; and that's why we are persuading people— but we are open to God, and open as well, I hope, to your consciences. <sup>12</sup>We aren't trying to recommend ourselves again! We are giving you a chance to be proud of us, to have something to say to those who take pride in appearances rather than in people's hearts. <sup>13</sup>If we are beside ourselves, you see, it's for God; and if we are in our right mind, it's for you. <sup>14</sup>For the Messiah's love makes us press on. We have come to the conviction that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all in order that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised on their behalf.



2 Corinthians 5:11–15 N. T. Wright

*Paul's Early Epistles*

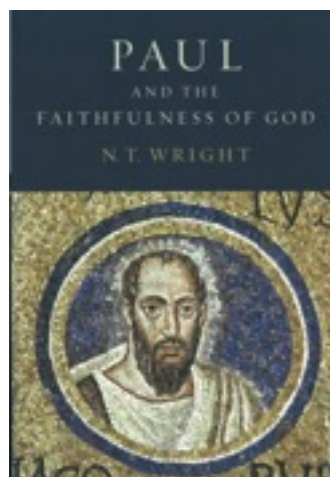
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<sup>16</sup>From this moment on, therefore, we don't regard anybody from a merely human point of view. Even if we once regarded the Messiah that way, we don't do so any longer. <sup>17</sup>Thus, if anyone is in the Messiah, there is a new creation! Old things have gone, and look— everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>It all comes from God. He reconciled us to himself through the Messiah, and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. <sup>19</sup>This is how it came about: God was reconciling the world to himself in the Messiah, not counting their transgressions against them, and entrusting us with the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors, speaking on behalf of the Messiah, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore people on the Messiah's behalf to be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>The Messiah did not know sin, but God made him to be sin on our behalf, so that in him we might embody God's faithfulness to the covenant.

Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5):

5. Paul saw this massive set of external and internal conflicts as proof of his genuineness to the Corinthians, as part of the process God was using to progress the gospel; and his part was as an ambassador of Christ as Christ was building his kingdom worldwide, which he hoped would motivate true, sacrificial participation of churches in this ministry.

2 Corinthians 6:1–18



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

<sup>1</sup>So, as we work together with God, we appeal to you in particular: when you accept God's grace, don't let it go to waste!

2 Corinthians 6:1 N. T. Wright

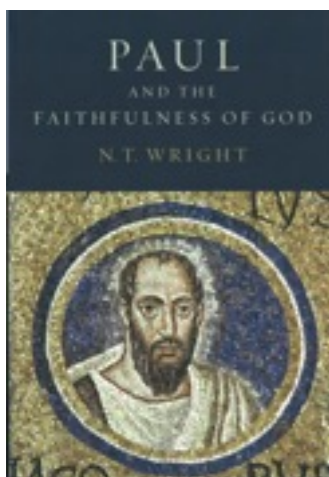
Now Paul turns everything he has been saying back to the Corinthians, with an appeal of his total commitment to them, based on all he has just said.

He talked about his qualifications, his sincerity, his intensity, and his direct speech as all being compelled by the love of Christ and his call.

But now he reviews some of his “conflicts without and fears within” as the final motivation for them to stay the course with him.

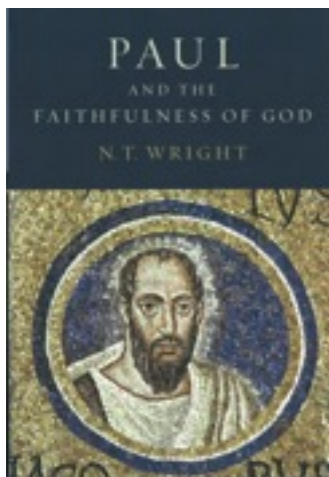
*Paul's Early Epistles*

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<sup>3</sup>We put no obstacles in anybody's way, so that nobody will say abusive things about our ministry. <sup>4</sup>Instead, we recommend ourselves as God's servants: with much patience, with sufferings, difficulties, hardships, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, going without food, <sup>6</sup>with purity, knowledge, great-heartedness, kindness, the holy spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>by speaking the truth, by God's power, with weapons for God's faithful work in left and right hand alike, <sup>8</sup>through glory and shame, through slander and praise; as deceivers, and yet true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, yet very well known; as dying, and look—we are alive; as punished, yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sad, yet always celebrating; as poor, yet bringing riches to many; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.



2 Corinthians 6:3–10 N. T. Wright

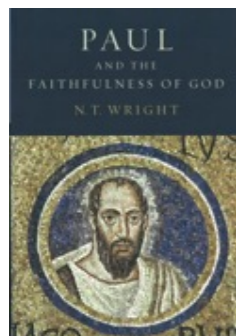
*Paul's Early Epistles*

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## Issue: Perspectives of “success” in ministry

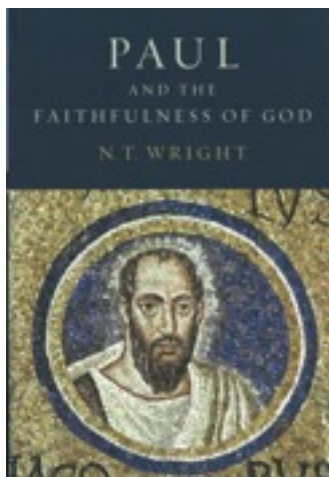
### Questions:

1. How does Paul’s perspective of “success” in ministry compare with our churches today?
2. How does it compare with your own perspective of successful ministry? of success in your own ministry?
3. What about the mega-church vs. small church tension (one seen as successful and the others as not)? How should we think about this? How does denominationalism figure into this discussion?
4. What should our standards of success in ministry look like?



Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5):

1. Christ’s building of his kingdom is a “triumphal march” (which he is accomplishing through building His church). But the process will be one battle after another, in which some will grow closer to His kingdom and some will be driven farther away. 2:14–17
2. Leaders are qualified as stewards of the New Covenant (not by our own merits), and as we proclaim the good news, the Spirit has written the words of the covenant on the hearts of those who believe and will transform them into the glory of the Lord himself. 3:1–18

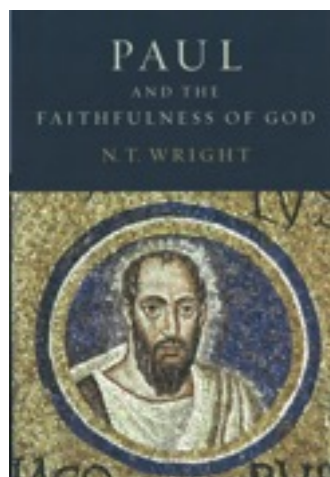


Paul's "theology of perspective on ministry"—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12-7:5):

3. We do not lose heart, because we are simply clay pots filled with the glory of Christ, and when under all kinds of pressure the cracks allow others to see Christ (except those who are perishing). And the entire process of our outer man decaying is producing inner renewal day by day, and an eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:1–17
4. We will be given new bodies like Christ's when our old one is destroyed, and we will appear before Christ in the future to give an account of our ministry as ambassadors for Christ; therefore, we need to press on in our ministry recognizing that we are new creations in process and see all believers through this lens. 2 Corinthians 5:1–21

Paul’s “theology of perspective on ministry”—his calling, what success really is (2 Corinthians 2:12-7:5):

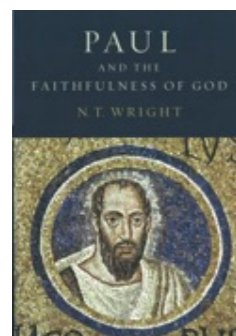
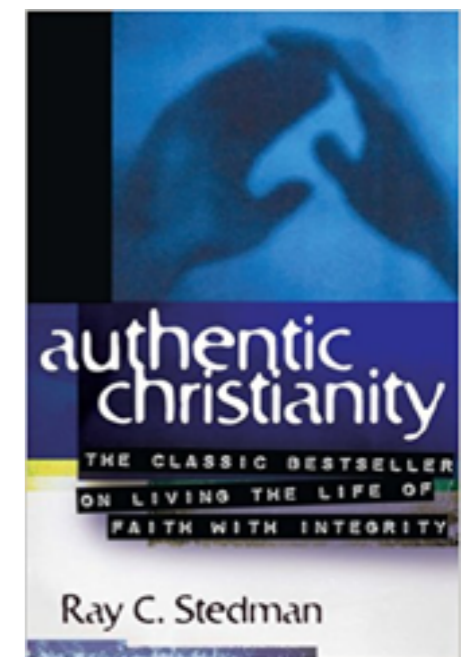
5. We should anticipate a massive set of external and internal conflicts as we serve as ambassadors for Christ and view these conflicts as the process of Christ building His kingdom through His churches and motivating true, sacrificial participation of churches in this ministry. 2 Corinthians 6:1–18



## 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5

It is a very special passage. We have a course on it in BILD Leadership Series I: *Ministry Perspectives: Conflicts Without and Fears Within*.

Again I was shaped profoundly in my thinking by a Ray Stedman book: *Authentic Christianity* (1973), which is basically completely built around 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5 (\$9.99 on Kindle (2 espressos—go cold turkey for one day!))



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*Paul's Early Epistles*

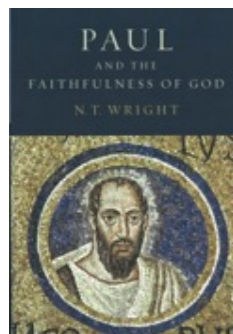
Two big messages here:

Leaders on our apostolic team or senior leadership, what do you expect? I mean really expect?

As churches, how are you doing? Buying in? Sacrificing?

Or is the culture of “success” of North American churches really your standard?

It is hard for us to stay this motivated; we have everything. It is not hard for Coptic Egyptians to stay motivated, where, for example, some were murdered on the way to a monastery this week.



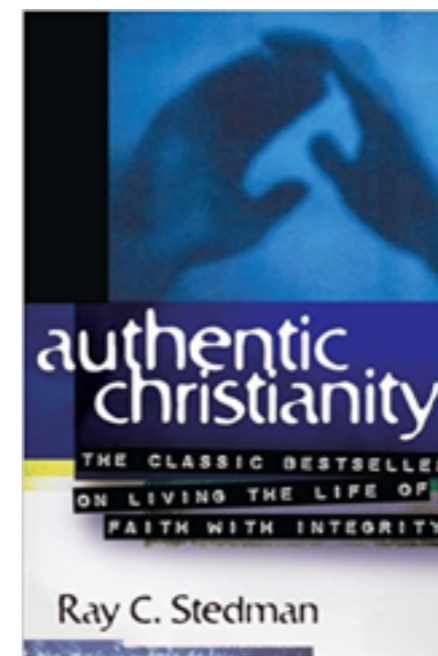
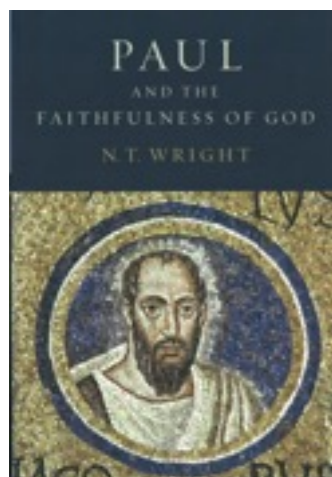
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*Paul's Early Epistles*

What is your perspective on the success of the ministry we are in together?

both our own network of churches and the ministry of our apostolic team in BILD?

What is your perspective on the success of your own ministry? of your life?



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*Paul's Early Epistles*