

Study Guide: State of the Ephesian Congregation 40 years “down the road”. Rev. 2:2-7, 23

- **I Know:**

- How is the Lord qualified to “*know*” and evaluate the Ephesian Christians’ works including their “*minds and hearts*”?
 - Revelation 1:12, 13; 2:1
 - Paul’s teaching: **Ephesians 2:6**
- For people who read these texts today, would they feel comforted? threatened? or?

- **Your Works:**

- What is the character of the Ephesians “**toil**” and “**endurance**”?
 - **Toil:** “*every form of labor that involves ministry (= service to others.)*”¹ “*...a cut, i.e. (by analogy) toil (as reducing the strength), literal or figurative; by implication pains :- labour, + trouble, weariness.*”²
 - **Endurance:** *cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy:- enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting).*³
 - Paul’s Teaching **Ephesians 2:10; 4:12,13**
- Do these characteristics describe service to others in your congregation? Your workplace?
- Where the Ephesians successful in resisting false teachers and teachings?
- Paul’s teaching **Ephesians 4:14**
- What false teachings have you had to resist in your Christian adventure?

¹ Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation: New Covenant Commentary Series* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 25

² Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary

³ Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

- **First Love:**

- Does **first** imply their love at conversion, their foremost⁴ love, or both?
- Paul's teaching: **Ephesians 4:2; 5:1,2,25**
- N.T. Wright: *"'Love', in the early Christian sense, is something you do, giving hospitality and practical help to those in need, particularly to other Christians who are poor, sick, or hungry. That was the chief mark of the early church. NO other non-ethnic group had ever behaved like this. 'Love' of this kind reflecting (they would have said) God's own self-giving love for them, was both the best expression of, and the best advertisement for faith in this God."*⁵

- **Repent or face Removal**

- Paul's Teaching: **Ephesians 5:5,6**
- Does the judgement "fit the crime"?
 - *"This particular warning has created no end of trouble for later believers, who for the most part perceive the punishment to far exceed the crime. But that says more about us than it does about the author of Johannine literature, since he perceived the whole of the Christian faith to be a matter of experiencing God's love for us through Christ and then returning the love to him by loving others from this perspective, to ail at this point is to fail exceedingly---if not altogether...which is why for him the "punishment is precisely in keeping with the "crime"."*⁶

- **Conquers**

- Paul's teaching: **Ephesians 6:10-18**
- Was the Lord saying that the Ephesians had to wage war against their tendency to be fulfilled in acts of purposeful service as ends in themselves rather than as a means to the ends of loving God and others?

- **Tree of life**

- "The great temple of Artemis (In Ephesus) had within its extensive grounds a wonderful garden focused on a particular tree...It is no accident, then, that this letter finished with the promise that God, too, has a 'Paradise', a beautiful garden, with 'the tree of life' as its heart."⁷
 - Are the Ephesians being given a chance to succeed where Adam and Eve failed? Are you?

⁴ *"foremost* (in time, place, order or importance) :- before, beginning, best, chief (-est), first (of all), former." Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

⁵ N.T. Wright, *Revelation for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2011), 13.

⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation: New Covenant Commentary Series* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 27

⁷ N.T. Wright, *Revelation for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2011), 12