

*I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!  
I would fly away and be at rest.*

*Psalm 55:6*



# **Crowns Revealed**

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## **Forward**

Jesus wore a crown of thorns that we may wear a crown of hope.

### **God rewards us abundantly.**

Jesus assured the disciples that anyone who gives up something valuable for his sake will be repaid many times over in this life, although not necessarily in the same form.

For example, a person may be rejected by his or her family for accepting Christ, but he or she will gain the larger family of believers.

### **God rewards us according to his standards.**

Jesus turned the world's values upside down. Consider the most powerful or well-known people in our world—how many got where they are by being humble, self-effacing, and gentle? Not many!

But in the life to come, the last will be first—if they got in last place by choosing to follow Jesus. Don't forfeit eternal rewards for temporary benefits. Be willing to make sacrifices now for greater rewards later. Be willing to accept human disapproval, while knowing that you have.

You may receive an incorruptible crown, a crown of righteousness, a crown of life, a crown of rejoicing, or the crown of glory.

Each of these is available to the faithful believer.

## Chapter 1

### The Incorruptible Crown

The Incorruptible Crown is for mastery over sin nature. The Corinthians are being urged to run the Christian life in such a way as to receive the reward in the end. Here the emphasis is self-control

#### 1 Cor. 9:25-27

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Winning a race requires purpose and discipline. Paul uses this illustration to explain that the Christian life takes hard work, self-denial, and grueling preparation. As Christians, we are running toward our heavenly reward. The essential disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and worship equip us to run with vigor and stamina. Don't merely observe from the grandstand; don't just turn out to jog a couple of laps each morning. Train diligently—your spiritual progress depends upon it.

At times we must even give up something good in order to do what God wants. Each person's special duties determine the discipline and denial that he or she must accept. Without a goal, discipline is nothing but self-punishment.

With the goal of pleasing God, our denial seems like nothing compared to the eternal, imperishable reward that will be ours. It is the Imperishable crown.

When Paul says he might be disqualified, he does not mean that he could lose his salvation, but rather that he could lose his privilege of telling others about Christ.

### Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ. They are the by-products of Christ's control—we can't obtain them by *trying* to get them without his help. If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us, we must join our lives to his (see John 15:4-5).

We must know him, love him, remember him, and imitate him. As a result, we will fulfill the intended purpose of the law—to love God and our neighbors. Which of these qualities do you want the Spirit to produce in you?

Because the God who sent the law also sent the Spirit, the by-products of the Spirit-filled life are in perfect harmony with the intent of God's law. A person who exhibits the fruit of the Spirit fulfills the law far better than a person who observes the rituals but has little love in his or her heart.

### Matthew 6:19

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Storing up treasures in heaven is not limited to tithing but is accomplished by all acts of obedience to God. There is a sense in which giving our money to God's work is like investing in heaven.

But our intention should be to seek the fulfillment of God's purposes in all we do, not merely what we do with our money.

### Matthew 25:21

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Jesus is coming back—we know this is true. Does this mean we must quit our jobs in order to serve God? No, it means we are to use our time, talents, and treasures diligently in order to serve God completely in whatever we do. For a few people, this may mean changing professions. For most of us, it means doing our daily work out of love for God.

### Romans 6:11

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Count yourselves dead to sin” means that we should regard our old sinful nature as dead and unresponsive to sin. Because of our union and identification with Christ, we are no longer obligated to carry out those old motives, desires, and goals. So let us consider ourselves to be what God has in fact made us. We have a new start, and the Holy Spirit will help us become in our daily experience what Christ has declared us to be.

### Rev. 22:18

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

This warning is given to those who might purposefully distort the message in this book. Moses gave a similar warning in Deut. 4:1-4. We too must handle the Bible with care and great respect so that we do not distort its message, even unintentionally. We should be quick to put its principles into practice in our lives. No human explanation or interpretation of God’s Word should be elevated to the same authority as the text itself.

## Hebrews 12:1

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

This “great cloud of witnesses” is composed of the people described in Hebrews 11. Their faithfulness is a constant encouragement to us. We do not struggle alone, and we are not the first to struggle with the problems we face. Others have run the race and won, and their witness stirs us to run and win also. What an inspiring heritage we have!

The Christian life involves hard work. It requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently, and to struggle against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit. To live effectively, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We will stumble if we look away from him to stare at ourselves or at the circumstances surrounding us. We should be running for Christ, not ourselves, and we must always keep him in sight.

## Chapter 2

### The Crown of Righteousness

1. **Crown of Righteousness.** For living righteously in this world. They look forward to Christ return. They are not captivated by the world, but hunger and thirst after righteousness.

### 2 Tim. 4:7-8

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Righteousness is a crown. Crowns are given in recognition of one's place in life. If one rejects God's grace and chooses to be guided by the lust of his old man instead of the spirit of God, there is no crown of righteousness awaiting him. If he is willing to become righteous, he must first receive God's guidance. He must then believe them by doing what God requires. This is renewing of one's mind to God's word, that he might become transformed, that he might fruit God's perfect will.

### Philip. 3:20

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Paul challenged the Philippians to pursue Christlikeness by following Paul's own pattern or example. This did not mean, of course, that they should copy everything he did.

He had just stated that he was not perfect (Phil. 3:12). But as he focused his life on being like Christ, so should they. The Gospels may not yet have been in circulation, so Paul could not tell them to read the Bible to see what Christ was like. Therefore he urged them to imitate him. That Paul could tell people to follow his example is a testimony to his character. Can you do the same? What kind of follower would a new Christian become if he or she imitated you?

Paul criticized not only the Judaizers, but also the self-indulgent Christians, people who claim to be Christians but don't live up to Christ's model of servanthood and self-sacrifice. These people satisfy their own desires before even thinking about the needs of others. Freedom in Christ does not mean freedom to be selfish. It means taking every opportunity to serve and to become the best person you can be.

Citizens of Philippi had the same rights and privileges as the citizens of Rome, because Philippi was a Roman colony. Likewise, we Christians will one day experience all the special privileges of our heavenly citizenship, because we belong to Christ. Let us not be so tied to this life that we would be sorry to see Christ return.

The phrase "lowly bodies" does not imply any negative attitude toward the human body. However, the bodies we will receive when we are raised from the dead will be glorious, like Christ's resurrected body. Those who struggle with pain, physical limitations, or disabilities can have wonderful hope in the resurrection 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

**There are many righteous people listed in the Scriptures.**

Abel was righteous Matthew 23:35

Noah was a righteous man Genesis 6:9, 7:1

Abraham was a righteous man – Romans 4:2

Lot was a righteous man, second Peter 2:7– 8

Zacharias was a righteous man – Matthew 23:35

Simeon was a righteous man – Luke 2:25

John the Baptist was a righteous man – Mark 6:20

Mary's husband, Joseph was a righteous man – Matthew 1:19

Jesus, the Christ was a righteous man – 1 John 2:1

Joseph, the counselor was a righteous man – Luke 23:50

The gospel that reveals the righteousness of God declares that the righteous shall live by faith.

### Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. [17] For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Paul was not ashamed because his message was the gospel of Christ, the Good News.

It was a message of salvation, it had life-changing power, and it was for everyone. When you are tempted to be ashamed, remember what the Good News is all about. If you focus on God and on what God is doing in the world rather than on your own inadequacy, you won't be ashamed or embarrassed.

Why did the message go to the Jews first? They had been God's special people for more than 2,000 years, ever since God chose Abraham and promised great blessings to his descendants (Genesis 12:1-3).

God did not choose the Jews because they deserved to be chosen (Deut. 7:7-8; Deut. 9:4-6), but because he wanted to show his love and mercy to them, teach them, and prepare them to welcome his Messiah into the world. God chose them, not to play favorites, but so that they would tell the world about his plan of salvation.

For centuries the Jews had been learning about God by obeying his laws, keeping his feasts, and living according to his moral principles. Often they would forget God's promises and requirements; often they would have to be disciplined; but still they had a precious heritage of belief in the one true God. Of all the people on earth, the Jews should have been the most ready to welcome the Messiah and to understand his mission and message—and some of them were (see Luke 2:25, 36-38). Of course, the disciples and the great apostle Paul were faithful Jews who recognized in Jesus God's most precious gift to the human race.

Jews and Christians alike stood against the idolatrous Roman religions, and Roman officials often confused the two groups. This was especially easy to do since the Christian church in Rome could have been originally composed of Jewish converts who had attended the Feast of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1ff). By the time Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, however, many Gentiles had joined the church. The Jews and the Gentiles needed to know the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

The gospel shows us both how righteous God is in his plan for us to be saved, and also how we may be made fit for eternal life. By trusting Christ, our relationship with God is made right. "From first to last" God declares us to be righteous because of faith and faith alone.

Paul is quoting Habakkuk 2:4. Habakkuk may have understood "will live" to mean this present life only. But Paul extends this statement to include eternal life. As we trust God, we are saved; we find life both now and forever.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Crown of Life**

Believers are given the crown of **life for** enduring trials while proceeding in God's plan. The third level to obtain is to proceed in God's plan for your life while enduring trials. The believer who moves forward in God's call an assignment in the face of difficulty, even martyrdom will receive the crown of life.

**James 1:12**

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

The crown of life is like the victory wreath given to winning athletes (see 1 Cor. 9:25). God's crown of life is not glory and honor here on earth, but the reward of eternal life—living with God forever. The way to be in God's winners' circle is by loving him and staying faithful even under pressure.

Temptation comes from evil desires inside us, not from God. It begins with an evil thought and becomes sin when we dwell on the thought and allow it to become an action. Like a snowball rolling downhill, sin grows more destructive the more we let it have its way. The best time to stop a temptation is before it is too strong or moving too fast to control.

#### Rev. 2:10-11

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Testing and trials are part of the Christian life.

It should be understood that when faced with testing trials many Christians turn back and did not continue in the past that God has called them to run on.

#### John 16:33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

If the world hates you, keep in mind that he hated Christ first.

#### John 15:18

If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world; from each other we need love and support. Do you allow small problems to get in the way of loving other believers? Jesus commands that you love them, and he will give you the strength to do it.

### 2 Tim. 3:10-12

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, [11] Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. [12] Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

The next level toward fulfilling God's plan is to endure hardships and persecution.

The reward is for preserving and remaining faithful. There he Ward is not given for having great faith in getting delivered from trials or test. We are faithful to the Lord in the trial The Lord is faithful to reward us for enduring the trial.

#### References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments taken from:

*Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

## **Chapter 4**

### **A Crown of Rejoicing.**

The crown of rejoicing we receive for leading others to Christ and in righteousness.

**Philip. 4:1**

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

The crown of joy is for influencing others toward righteousness.

**1 Thes. 2:19**

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

Heavenly rewards are not just how we live and what we do. They are also for the influence we have on how others live in what they do.

**Daniel 12:3**

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Great suffering is in store for God's people throughout the years ahead. This way of describing the future is also used by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 30:7) and Jesus (Matthew 24:21ff). Yet the great suffering is tempered by a great promise of hope for true believers.

This is a clear reference to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, although the eternal fates of each will be quite different. Up to this point in time, teaching about the resurrection was not common, although every Israelite believed that one day he or she would be included in the restoration of the new kingdom. This reference to a bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost was a sharp departure from common belief. (See also Job 19:25-26; Psalm 16:10; and Isaiah 26:19 for other Old Testament references to the resurrection.)

Many people try to be stars in the world of entertainment, only to find their stardom temporary. God tells us how we can be eternal "stars"—by being wise and leading many to God's righteousness. If we share our

Lord with others, we can be true stars—radiantly beautiful in God’s sight!

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Crown of Glory**

This crown is fulfilling your calling and finishing the work that has been assigned to you.

The greatest achievement is to fulfill your calling and finish the work God gave you to do. This Scripture references speaking to pastors who finished their work faithfully, but this crown is not only for pastors. It is for anyone who finds him fulfills their assignment God has given them.

### 1 Peter 5:4

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

These rewards are being given up on Christ return. Christ is seen as a chief Shepherd paying his workers that he contracted did our labor to Shepherd for him.

Earthly crowns were made of vines and other things. This crown is made out of glory.

### Isaiah 28:5

In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

These crowns are available to all who serve at the position and with the capacity they were given. It is not just the office of the pastor, although that is a context of this verse the application extends to all believers to become what God has created him to be and they serve him in that position.

### Acts 7:55-56

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, [56] And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

Stephen saw the glory of God, and Jesus the Messiah standing at God's right hand. Stephen's words are similar to Jesus' words spoken before the council (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69). Stephen's vision supported Jesus' claim and angered the Jewish leaders who had condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy. They would not tolerate Stephen's words, so they dragged him out and killed him. People may

not kill us for witnessing about Christ, but they will let us know they don't want to hear the truth and will often try to silence us. Keep honoring God in your conduct and words; though many may turn against you and your message, some will follow Christ. Remember, Stephen's death made a profound impact on Paul, who later became the world's greatest missionary. Even those who oppose you now may later turn to Christ.

### Isaiah 42:8

I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

When you feel broken and bruised or burned out in your spiritual life, God won't step on you or toss you aside as useless, but will gently pick you up. God's loving attributes are desperately needed in the world today. Through God's Spirit, we can show such sensitivity to people around us, reflecting God's goodness and honesty to them.

Sometimes called the Servant Song, these verses are about the Servant-Messiah, not the servant Cyrus (described in Isaiah 41). Israel and the Messiah are both often called *servant*. Israel, as God's servant, was to help bring the world to a knowledge of God. The Messiah, Jesus, would fulfill this task and show God himself to the world.

Part of Christ's mission on earth was to demonstrate God's righteousness and to be a light for the Gentiles (to all nations). Through Christ, all people have the opportunity to share in his mission. God calls us to be servants of his Son, demonstrating God's righteousness and bringing his light. What a rare privilege it is to help the Messiah fulfill his mission! But we must seek his righteousness (Matthew 6:33) before we demonstrate it to others, and let his light shine in us before we can be lights ourselves (Matthew 5:16; 2 Cor. 4:6).

### Isaiah 48:11

For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

There was nothing in Israel's actions, attitudes, or accomplishments to compel God to love and to save them. But for his own sake, to show who he is and what he can do, he saved them. God does not save us because we are good but because he loves us and because of his forgiving nature.

You may find it easy to complain when your life becomes complicated or difficult? Why would a loving God allow all kinds of unpleasant experiences to come to his children? This verse shows us plainly that God tests us in the "furnace of affliction." Rather than complain, our response should be to turn to God in faith for the strength to endure, and rejoice in our sufferings (see Romans 5:3; James 1:2-4). For without the testing, we would never know what we are capable of doing, nor would we grow. And without the refining, we will not become more pure and more like Christ. What kinds of adversity are you currently facing?

### Romans 8:18

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Sin has caused all creation to fall from the perfect state in which God created it. So the world is subject to frustration and bondage to decay so that it cannot fulfill its intended purpose. One day all creation will be liberated and transformed. Until that time it waits in eager expectation for the resurrection of God's children.

Christians see the world as it is—physically decaying and spiritually infected with sin. But Christians do not need to be

pessimistic, because they have hope for future glory. They look forward to the new heaven and new earth that God has promised, and they wait for God's new order that will free the world of sin, sickness, and evil. In the meantime, Christians go with Christ into the world where they heal people's bodies and souls and fight the evil effects of sin in the world.