

CROWN HIM

The Crowning Achievement of a Believer's Life

Introduction

- Hebrews 6:10
 - *For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.*
- 1 Corinthians 15:58
 - *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*

Read Text:

Revelation 22:12

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

Romans 14:10-11

“But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.””

The statement is: **Legacy is not so much the past** (as we tend to think of the concept) but rather I look at it - **as it is the future the present develops.**

Legacy – it is a paradox. What we do each and every moment of each and every day God gives us – matters and can make a difference. A life in Christ? It has purpose, significance. What we do now continually develops our past behind us and determines our future steps that lie unknown before us.

In today's message we are talking about that reality of a believer's life at the moment of judgment. Time ends and Eternity begins. What difference did our life make in the eyes of our creator and savior? We will find out, it says so in God's Word.

We are dealing with a subject that is often not addressed much and sadly GREATLY misunderstood by many when it is. The understanding and application of this subject is often mistaken for one of these approaches:

Two disclaimers for what we are NOT talking about today:

1. Not Prosperity Theology

There is a BIG difference between that heresy and the TRUTH of what we are talking about here today. The Prosperity theology (sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel, or the gospel of success) is a false religious doctrine that financial blessing is the will of God for Christians, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to Christian ministries will increase one's material wealth. Based on non-traditional interpretations of the Bible, the doctrine views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, he will deliver his promises of security and prosperity.

2. Earning and/or Losing Salvation

Without preaching entirely another sermon, let me simply remind us what scripture says about the matter and leave it there:

We cannot earn our salvation. Nothing we do out of our striving can gain us salvation

- Romans 3:23 – For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Ephesians 2:8 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the free gift of God

We cannot lose our salvation

- John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
- John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
- 1 John 5:12-13 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Now, with those misunderstandings cleared up - let’s briefly skim the surface of the topic at hand to gain some baseline.

👑 Background and Definitions:

We are examining the crowns mentioned in the New Testament today. The believer’s crowns.

Let’s define the word “Crown:”

- Any of various types of headgear such as worn by a monarch as a symbol of sovereignty, often made of precious metal and ornamented with valuable gems.
- A similar ornamental headgear worn by a person designated king or queen in a pageant, contest, etc.
- **Picture: Laurel Wreath Crown** An ornamental wreath or circlet for the head, conferred as a mark of victory, athletic or military distinction, etc.
- The distinction that comes from a great achievement.
- It is a symbol of power, or royalty, of acknowledgement, of significance, of status and glory

World History of the Crown

- Any type of special headgear to designate rulers dates back to ancient history, and is found in many separate civilizations around the globe.
- **Early Beginnings:** The precursor to the modern day crown was the browband called the diadem, which had been worn by the Persian emperors, was adopted by Constantine I, and was worn by all subsequent rulers of the later Roman Empire.
- The *corona radiata*: the "radiant crown" known best on the Statue of Liberty, was worn by pagan Roman emperors, part of the cult of Sol Invictus. It was referred to as "the chaplet studded with sunbeams" by Lucian, about 180 AD

- In the Native American civilizations of the Pre-Columbian New World we see they wore rare feathers as crowns.
 - Ancient Egypt we see elaborate cloth and metal headdresses on the pharaohs.
 - Ancient Greece we see laurel wreaths of ivy, flowers and precious metal.
 - We would see ancient Celtic chieftains wear crown types of gold, antlers or animal claws as crowns- sometimes a crown was worn around the neck known as a Torc.
- All over the world – the idea of a “crown” is recognized and its meaning is understood.
 - Though not as widely practiced today many monarchies still retain a crown as a national symbol in heraldry.

👑 Purposes and Uses in the Bible:

1. holy dedication
2. Endowed to someone as the highest of gifts
3. Set apart
4. Headpiece used in ordination of high priests
5. Royal crown for a king
6. Golden crown, ornamental crown, wreathed crown

👑 Use of Crowns in the Bible:

1. Consecration
2. Coronation
3. Exaltation
4. Reward

Two Greek References for Word Crown in the New Testament

- One is the diadem crown – which is meant to last. The other is the Greek word used for a little garland of wreaths – a wreath of leaves – which is not meant to last. Through Paul and the other writers, the Holy Spirit keenly used the word for crown that wasn't to last.

Let's now examine the 5 types of crowns the Bible references and what their application for us is:

👑 The 5 Crowns

The Crown of Incorruptibility

(Self – Denial)

Picture: Laurel Wreath Crown

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 9:25

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

Some of Paul's favorite illustrations seem to come from the Olympic games.

The Cost of Success

If we expect to gain the Incorruptible Crown, then we must enter into Christian living in the same spirit in which these individuals in the verse enter into their sports

Verse 24: "obtain" or "win"

- To seize eagerly that which you have your eyes and your heart set on

Verse 26: "not w/o aim"

- It conveys the idea of doing whatever you do openly, with pride in what you do.
- Not meek about it
- You don't apologize for being in the race
- Are you running your Christian life w/ certainty?

Verse 25: "self control"

- Being temperate
- Acting out of power that lies beyond your ability

Yielding to the Holy Spirit

Remember that the Holy spirit is who controls the life of every believer who yields control to Him, can produce His temperance in your life, then you can enjoy the victory on earth and you will be in the running for the Incorruptible Crown.

Verse 27 "subjection"

- Keeping your body under subjection
- God has promised it, not to all Christians, but He has promised it to all Christians who are willing to pay the price.

2 Timothy 2:5

"Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules."

- The implication of the verse is that no one who enters an athletic game can expect to win the prize unless they abide by the rules of the game
- We need to face the truth that in our Christian experience we have entered a race and there is a life of obedience as a result of the relationship we have with Christ.

And...we do not want to be disqualified.

The Crown of Exultation or Rejoicing

(Soul winning / witness)

Picture: Gold Radiant Crown

Key verses:

Philippians 4:1

“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”

1 Thessalonians 2:19

“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?”

- Hope = confidence in Greek
- Paul is saying to us: What is our confidence when we stand in the presence of the Lord at His coming? Our confidence in this case is related to people
- He is addressing the people as a crown in Philippians 4:1
- Paul is emphasizing that the Philippians and the Thessalonians – among others – are the crown which he expects as an award to him at the Judgments Seat of Christ.
- Are you going to have this crown to cast at the feet of Jesus?
- 1 Thessalonians 2:20 – “glory”
- These individuals who make up our crown will be our glory when we stand in the presence of Christ
- Glory = worship = where we get our word “doxology”
- We will cast our crowns – the names people that have been won to Christ at His feet in an act of worship

The Crown of Righteousness

(Living faithfully)

Picture: Gold Leaf Band

Key verse: 2 Timothy 4:8

“in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

- The easiest or the hardest crown to receive
- Paul is giving an appeal to Timothy to be faithful in the first 5 verses of Ch 4
- Paul begins to talk about his death:
- Paul’s Realization: his departure was at hand
- Paul gave a Summarization: summarized his life in 3 figures of speech:
 - Fought a good fight: I have wrestled well
 - Finished the race: running w/ patience
 - Hebrews 12:1-2

- *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*
 - Kept the faith
 - “kept” Greek word that speaks of “guarding” – Picture a Roman soldier guarding a treasure
- One of the reasons secularism has taken hold of our culture is because enough believers have not guarded the faith. We have not kept it.
- This crown is literally translated as a crown for doing right.
- Righteousness has already been imparted to us when we trusted the Lord as our Savior. This is crown is for striving to do right.

The Crown of Life (Enduring Trials)

Picture: Red Jeweled Crown

Key verses:

James 1:12

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Revelation 2:10

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Trial – broad word

- Solicitation of evil
- testing
- May include both ideas at once

We will have times of testing

1 Corinthians 10:13

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

1 Peter 4:12-13

- Partakers of Christ’s sufferings....
- *“Since you do suffer with Me, you will reign with Me.”*

James 1:12

- “perseveres” – abide under / to stay put

James 1:3-4

- Patience

- The tests come in our lives in order that patience might be produced in our lives

The Crown of Glory (Ministry)

Picture: Maroon Jeweled Crown

Key Verse: **1 Peter 5:4**

“And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

Who is Paul talking about here?

Let’s go back and read the passage in context. This is important. There is a vital understanding to be had here.

1 Peter 5:1-5

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”

Commonly and perhaps bearing some confusion referred to “the pastor’s crown”

Paul teaches us in his letters to Timothy and Titus (known as the Pastoral Epistles) that the office of the pastor/shepherd/bishop and deacon have a higher set of qualification to serve in those roles and therefore accountability and expectation to be above reproach in those areas of qualification.

One of the understandings with this crown is the need for patience and endurance as well as evident spiritual maturity

The crown is available to all who are willing to be under shepherds
It bears with it a Responsibility of ministering to the needs of the flock – the people

Those in ministry are not to do ministry out of constraint – out of necessity or feeling compelled

Those in ministry are not to do ministry out of desire for money

Those in ministry are not to do ministry out of a desire for gain

This is a challenge, a critique as well as exhortation to those in ministry!

The Bible speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as the:

Good Shepherd (John 10)

Great shepherd (Hebrews 13)

Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5)

In ministry as well as the Christian life for all of us our ultimate example is Jesus:

The good Shepherd gave his life for his sheep.

The great shepherd is interceding for his sheep all the time

The chief Shepherd is coming back for his sheep

When he comes back he has a crown for everyone who has faithfully and purely fulfilled the role of an under shepherd to other believers.

Transition

👑 Understanding the Believer's Crowns:

Crowns as Rewards

The rewards which are promised to believers are described in a number of different ways in the Word of God.

Revelation 3:11 – Hold onto your “crown”

Church of Philadelphia

If Christ is saying this to this church then certainly it is important!

There tends to be a hesitation in talking about rewards? Why? Because we have a misunderstanding about their importance and their intent!

We say: “But we ought to serve the Lord just because we love Him right?” - Absolutely!

However as believers we have every right and reason to understand about rewards
We have every reason to be striving for the best rewards for when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. There is nothing selfish or self-centered about that – it is thoroughly scriptural

But we say: “This sounds like an awfully selfish thing!” - Well, I would agree with you that it is terribly selfish if you plan to take those crowns and pile one of them on top of the other until you get a great big stack of them stuff them in a heaven size trophy case and drag it around with you for all eternity. However, this is not what we are going to do with any crowns we receive.

We are going to lay every crown that we receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ, at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ, to show Him how much we love Him, how much we adore Him, and how glad we were to be of service to Him

Now the reward should not be the GOAL of our service and life, but rather the GAUGE of Christian living

Exhortation and Warning

2 John 1:8

“Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”

Living For Christ

We are always to be working and living to please Him though. Colossians 3:17.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

“Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

James 2:17-18

“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

So - we are not working towards them for the achievement of a personal gain - that would be selfish.

So - we are not working to earn our eternal life. – that would be heresy

So what is the point then?

Crowns are not meant to last for us

Crowns are not meant for us to keep

Our rewards the Bible talks about are not meant for us to keep them or carry with us through all eternity

So – if they aren’t supposed to last – then what are we supposed to do with them?

The Lord Jesus is the victor, and our victory is really His victory which is achieved only by our faith – not our works. Crowns are given as rewards for faithfulness in living out Christian life in the victory that is Christ. They remind us of our responsibility to abide in Him.

We are given the example in **Revelation 4:10 – 11**.

“the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

We are to CROWN HIM

There is one final question. How? How do all of these crowns have the meaning and value they do?

👑 **The Crown that Enables all Others:**

The Crown of Thorns

Picture: Crown of Thorns

Key verse: **Matthew 27:29**

“And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Mark 15:17 / John 19:2

This was a coronation of shame

Soldiers pressed the spines of the crown down until they were embedded in Jesus’ scalp.

Yet Jesus was conquering.

During the fall – God cursed the earth w/ thorns.

Now God’s son carried that curse on his head. The thorns also speak of wilderness (OT ref)

Jesus – who knew the wilderness embarks on a journey into the wilderness of Hell itself and the wasteland of our sin

Sinful man, who brought the kingdom of thorns down upon his own head, was helpless to save himself.

The book of Hebrews tells us in 2:9 that Jesus is now crowned w/ glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might endure death for everyone”

Jesus defeated death, conquering it once and for all so that we may have the hope of eternal life.

Scott comes up

Conclusion

These crowns and our lives would be worth nothing w/o this sacrifice and gift. Life would not be worth living, nothing to persevere for, no purpose in other’s lives, no meaning to right, and no reason to serve. There would be no glory, no purpose, no hope!

Accept there is in Jesus Christ! He lives! He reigns! And out of love for him we are to live our lives with excellence striving for the Crowns awaiting the believers so that we may bring glory and honor to the Lord at the his throne as we crown Him with Many crowns.

The Crowning Achievement of a Believer’s Life is to cast the crowns we receive back to the King eternal who gives them!

Matthew 6:19-20

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;”

2 Corinthians 4:18

“while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Among the final few words of the final chapter in the final book of the Bible: Jesus has these words to leave us:

Revelation 22:12

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”

Time can be harsh. But the time spent in this life is meant for something else beyond ourselves or present circumstances. It is meant to bring Jesus glory for all eternity.

So I ask you today to examine your heart, examine your life. Where are your crowns? And if you have some who are they for? Are you training to earn them for yourself in vain? Or are they for your Lord and Savior – the King of all Creation and the Lord Everlasting – Jesus?

Maybe you are here today and you don't know Jesus at all. Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for you because He loves you. He wore the crown we each deserve to wear because of that love. The crown that makes a difference – the one we will never have to wear because He bore it for us!

At the conclusion of the service there will be pastors and deacons down along the front of the platform ready to meet with you, to pray with you. Don't wait – if you don't know Jesus, you can today! He is coming back quickly! If you need to share with someone a struggle in your life – they are here for you.

Let's pray.