

## Crowns for Christians

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

One of Aesop's fables is the story of "The Hare and the Tortoise." The fable goes like this: The Hare was once boasting of his speed before the other animals. "I have never yet been beaten," said he, "when I put forth my full speed. I challenge any one here to race with me." The Tortoise said quietly, "I accept your challenge." "That is a good joke," said the Hare; "I could dance round you all the way." "Keep your boasting till you have been beaten," answered the Tortoise. "Shall we race?" So a course was fixed and a start was made. The Hare darted almost out of sight at once, but soon stopped and, to show his contempt for the Tortoise, lay down to have a nap. The Tortoise plodded on and plodded on, and when the Hare awoke from his nap, he saw the Tortoise just near the winning-post and could not run up in time to save the race. Then said the Tortoise: "Plodding wins the race."

The Bible compares the Christian life to a race (Heb. 12:1-2) that must be run if we are going to receive reward from the Lord when He returns (1 Cor. 9:25-27). We must plod and persevere if we are going to be rewarded on the coming day. The way Jesus will reward His saints on "that day" (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:8), the day in which He comes for His New Testament saints, is clearly outlined in Scripture.

Let's look at some introductory verses to this study.

2 Corinthians 5:10

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body (his acts and deeds), according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (worthy or worthless).

Our whole life and manner of living will be taken into consideration on this day and we will be rewarded according to how we have lived. Nothing will be left unturned. This is why we must persevere in our Christian living and service for the Lord. The Judgment Seat of Christ is NOT a place of judgment because of our sins; however, it is a place of inspection and examination of our overall living and service.

How we have conducted our life and served the Lord will determine the measure of our reward.

1 Corinthians 3:13

“Every man's work (acts or deeds in relationship to living and Christian service) shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.”

There will be a day of final examination for each Christian where they will be brought under the omniscient eye, scrutiny, and searching examination of Jesus Christ. Their entire life will be examined. The Lord will inspect the kind of works which each Christian has done in relationship to his overall living and service for Christ. Only those works which were done for Christ will last. Both the quality and quantity of our deeds will be examined. The manner, motive, and method behind our actions will be examined. All will be taken into consideration at this final examination. Only those works which have glorified God (1 Cor. 10:31) will withstand the test and remain.

1 Corinthians 3:14 puts it like this:

“If any man's work (action or deed) abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”

Jesus promised that there will be plenty of rewards handed out on this day (Heb. 6:10; 1 Cor. 15:58). Christ promised that His followers would even receive a reward for giving a cup of cold water in His name (Matt. 10:42). In some way, everything that we do for the Lord and which passes His test will bring reward into our lives.

“Only one life,  
Twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.”

Yes, in some way we will be rewarded for everything that we do which truly honors the Lord – our conduct, living, and service. In fact, the measure of reward will be visibly portrayed by the way that we can reflect the glory of Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:8). We will note this in more detail at the close of our study.

Every Christian will receive some reward and the praise of God (1 Cor. 4:5). However, the Bible also teaches there will be special rewards given to Christians for particular acts of service rendered unto Him and specific areas of faithful living. These rewards are explained as crowns that Christians will receive when they stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is why I have called this study “Crowns for Christians.” The crowns or rewards mentioned in the Bible are the cream of the crop. They will be the highest possible rewards that Christians can receive. God will reward us for serving Christ righteously, faithfully, and consistently. These are crowns (rewards) that are given for some specialized service or specific achievement during our time on earth.

There are five crowns mentioned in Scripture that Christians can receive. These are crowns or rewards that believers can actually receive at Christ’s coming for their faithful living. These crowns are rewards that are given to Christians who excel in some specific area of their service and living. Yes, every Christian will receive reward, but these special rewards (crowns) will be given to those who have consistently overcome and demonstrated some victorious manner of living and commitment in their service to the Lord (Revelation 2:26).

I do believe Scripture mentions these crowns as material (literal) crowns and not just a time of recognition that believers will receive at Christ’s coming. We will be given literal crowns since only material crowns can be cast before the feet of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 4:10 reveals:

“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne ...”

Yes, these are literal crowns, but these same crowns will NOT be worn on our heads in Heaven throughout eternity. Instead, we will cast them before the feet of Jesus. As part of our worship the Church will cast their crowns before the throne. They lay aside their given glory to add to His glory, thereby ascribing all glory to Him. In other words, the Church will not feel worthy to wear visible crowns on their heads in the presence of Jesus Christ.

“Standing before Him at last,  
Trials and trouble all past,  
Crowns at His feet we will cast  
Jesus is coming again!”

Since the crowns are described as future rewards in Revelation 4:10 and in other passages (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Rev. 2:10,13; 1 Thess. 2:19), their blessing and benefits seem to apply to the future life and not our present-day lives here on earth, as some have suggested.

Here is the main point. Although we will receive literal crowns to cast at Jesus’ feet (Rev. 4:10), the eternal crown or reward that we will experience is not going to be a physical crown on our head, since the descriptions of the crowns portray this (the crown of righteousness in 2 Timothy 4:8, the crown of life in James 1:12, Revelation 2:10, the crown of rejoicing in Philippians 4:1 1 Thessalonians 2:19–20, or the crown of glory in 1 Peter 5:4). The Biblical writers described the crowns in figurative language (glory, joy, life, righteousness, etc.), not in literal language (gold, silver, etc.). Therefore, the true reward or eternal crown will actually be something that believers will experience, a specific quality of life they will enjoy, throughout eternity.

- Crown of life (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10) = added enjoyment of eternal life in view of present-day sufferings
- Crown of incorruption (1 Cor. 9:24-27) = an eternal appreciation of one’s sinless and redemptive body in view of the struggle and victory over sin
- Crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19-20) = joy over saved souls as a result of our Gospel witness
- Crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) = inward satisfaction for maintaining a righteous life while living out our days on earth
- Crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4) = God’s eternal honor and recognition for a pastor’s ministry and service

The key to understanding the crowns and the eternal rewards associated with them is seen in their descriptions. The description of each crown portrays how God's saints will enjoy eternity. The manner in which each crown is described is the way each believer will experience and enjoy eternity. The crowns or rewards will be primarily experienced or enjoyed, as a quality of life, instead of worn on the head. The eternal reward will NOT be a visible crown on our head (Rev. 4:10), but the reward of being able to enjoy eternity in some specific way, a quality of life giving to faithful believers, which is explained in the crown's description. In short, the material crowns will not last for eternity, but what they describe will be experienced and enjoyed by those who receive them (glory, life, righteousness, rejoicing, appreciation, satisfaction), and this experience will become their true reward, which will last for eternity. The true reward is a different quality of life that can be enjoyed and uniquely experienced throughout eternity for each believer. Jesus Christ will reward His saints for living victoriously, righteously, and serving Him faithfully.

### 1. The crown of life (Revelation 2:10; James 1:12)

**Crown of Life (Martyr's Crown)**  
**James 1:12; Rev. 2:10**



**Reward: Experiencing a deeper and richer appreciation of eternal life coupled with an outward manifestation of radiance (1 Pet. 5:1).**

This crown has been called "the martyrs crown" since it is a crown that is related to suffering. This specific crown is given to those saints who endure trials which are directly related to earthly persecution and suffering. Those Christians who endure affliction and suffering, which

is related to standing up for Christ and living for Him, will receive this special crown. It will be rewarded to those believers who were not afraid to suffer for Christ and even experience martyrdom for Christ.

Revelation 2:10 declares:

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

There are two areas of suffering.

a. Suffering related to our stand for Christ

The “Foxes book of Martyrs” reveals the untold deaths of millions of Christians throughout the years. The sufferings and death of great multitudes of Christians will not be forgotten by God. A crowning day is coming!

It’s interesting that those who suffer for Christ and die will be given a “crown of life.” The description given portrays how each saint, who receives this crown, will experience the enjoyment of eternal life. This is a reference to a quality of life granted to believers who faithfully suffer for Christ. Although every Christian will enjoy eternal life there is a special crown or reward promised to Christians who faithfully suffer for Christ by not recanting Him, becoming disloyal to Him, or exhibiting distrust or anger at Him during their time of suffering and trial.

What then is the reward? It likely refers to the joy and abundance of eternal life that a Christian will experience throughout eternity. The crown will be experienced in relationship to how a Christians can enjoy eternal life. Again, this is a special reward given to Christians for their endurance under persecution and suffering for Christ. It’s a reward for enduring trials, persecution, and even death for Jesus Christ. The Christian who passes through suffering victoriously will have a deeper and richer appreciation of eternal life. They will enjoy eternal life in an enhanced way. As we will note, the true reward of this crown focuses on experiencing a deeper and richer appreciation of eternal life in view of one’s suffering in this present life.

Please note that the reward for suffering is NOT eternal life. Eternal life is a free gift through faith or personal belief in Jesus Christ that all believers receive (John 1:11-12; 3:16; 1 John 5:11-12). Eternal life is never reviewed as a reward for suffering. Let us not make the mistake of teaching that eternal life is merited in any way (Rom. 6:23). However, our enjoyment and appreciation of it will be experienced in direct proportion to how we have withstood the trials of suffering and have been given the crown of life.

b. Suffering related to our sanctification in Christ

This same crown is mentioned elsewhere as a reward passing through the trials or sufferings related to the devil's temptations.

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.”

In this verse James returns to the theme with which he opened this passage with in James 1:2-3. It's here that James speaks of enduring the suffering related to “temptation” (trials and temptations from the devil) and experiencing perseverance (“patience”) during these times of trials. The word “tried” (James 1:12) suggests that all Satanic trials (James 1:13) consist of a certain amount of suffering that is related to our Christian journey in life. All temptation involves a certain amount of suffering that we must bear. The question is how we hold up under it, how we accept it, and pass through it. This will determine whether or not we will receive the crown of life.

Having to pass through Satan's temptations is not easy but God allows it (Matt. 4:1) to test our patience, loyalty, and love for Him. In fact, God sometimes will allow a test to come into our life (a health crisis, car accident, loss of job) that Satan will turn into a temptation as he seeks to question God's integrity and tempt us in the area of our faithfulness and commitment to God. The point is this; those Christian who steadfastly endure trials and have stood the test will receive the crown of life. Job would serve as an example of a Christian who passes the test or trial and suffering.

Job 1:21-22

“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”

Once again, the “crown” consists of “life” which means this crown or reward is somehow related to eternal life itself – a future quality of life experienced by faithful believers. In this case, it refers to a special enjoyment of eternal life that a Christian will experience throughout eternity who receives this reward. James is saying that the Christian who perseveres under trials, who does not yield to temptation and departs from the will of God, demonstrates his or her love for God (“them that love him” – James 1:12).

During temptations our love for Jesus Christ is proven. Do we love Him more than our sin? Are we going to follow Him or Satan’s temptation? Will we trust and depend upon the Lord through the trial or become angry at the Lord for allowing it to come into our lives? Jesus said in John 14:15, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” The Scriptures tell us repeatedly that God has abundant blessing reserved for those who love Him and one of these blessings is reward – a crown of life.

Those Christians that persevere under trials (temptations from the devil) will be rewarded a crown of life because of their love for God instead of Satan’s temptations. Of course, no person is sinless and perfect. However, there are Christians who possess much greater victory over temptations (Rev. 2:11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) and it’s these Christians that will be rewarded the crown of life. Only the Christian who consistently endures and lives victoriously above life’s temptations will receive this crown.

In summary, the crown of life is a reward given to those who walk by faith in the Lord’s power and promises and victoriously endure temptation, affliction, suffering, and even martyrdom because of their love and commitment for Jesus Christ. They do not give into Satan’s temptations or become disloyal to Christ. Instead, they live victorious over Satan’s temptations, even to the point of dying for Jesus Christ.



“I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). This is not a diadem which is a crown for a king (none of the crowns are) but this is the Greek word “stephanos” which is a crown for a winner or victor. The word that is used signified the “victor’s crown” at the races, not the royal crown of the king. It is the word stephanos from which we get the names Stephen and Stephanie. This crown was actually a wreath or garland of flowers which was given as a prize to victors in the public Greek games.

Once again, the description given of this crown (a crown of life) portrays how each saint who receives the crown will enjoy and experience eternal life. It is a reference to a quality of life granted to faithful believers. It is a quality of life that will be experienced throughout eternity. The saints who receive this crown will be able to experience the joy and blessing of eternal life in some greater capacity than the other saints in Heaven. Those who give their lives to Him in victoriously suffering through Satan’s temptations will in return receive a crown of life, which is a special capacity to enjoy eternal life in a deeper and richer way.

The ultimate crown or reward that these saints receive will be a special enjoyment of eternal life in Heaven. Those who suffer and die for Jesus Christ and who experience victory over Satan’s temptations will experience a deeper appreciation of eternal life in Heaven and throughout eternity. We might look at it this way. Everyone’s cup will be full in Heaven, but some people will have a different sized cup, or different capacity for enjoying Heaven.

When I visit our local Dairy Queen, I discover there are three levels of cups - small, medium and large. If you are feeling hungry you will order the large. Of course, a small milkshake will be as good as a large milkshake but you will get more in the large cup! This is the analogy that is given regarding one’s enjoyment of eternal life. This is what is in view in the expression “crown of life.” The literal crown that these saints receive will be a reflection of the fuller enjoyment of the glories of Heaven that these suffering and martyred believers will experience. It is apparently an added inner joy and fulfillment of the blessing which is related to eternal life in Heaven.

It seems that some believers will be able to experience eternal life in a deeper and more significant way than others. Their cup will be fuller than others. They will be able to experience a special and precious joy associated with eternal life.

Revelation 2:13

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."

Polycarp of Smyrna was burned at the stake in 155 A.D. at the ripe old age of 86. On the day of his execution the magistrate pressed him hard and said, 'Swear the oath, and I will release thee; revile the Christ.' But Polycarp said, 'Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?'

As the wood was piled around his feet and ignited, Polycarp turned his eyes skyward and said, "O Lord God Almighty, Father of the blessed and beloved Son, Jesus Christ, I thank you for giving me this day and this hour, that I may be numbered among your martyrs, to share the cup of Jesus, and to rise again to life everlasting." This man and millions of other Christians will receive the crown of life because of their stand for Christ and willingness to experience persecution and even death for Christ.

A group of 100 Romans soldiers had been drawn together in a special bond of closeness through the experiences they shared in battle. Among them were 40 Christians. One day the emperor called for a test of loyalty, demanding that every member of the army bow down before his statue. As each of the 40 believers passed before the image, they refused to worship it. One by one they declared, "I'm a Christian!" And everyone received the sentence of death. Because of his high regard for these men, the legion commander was heartsick as he marched them onto the ice, where they would be left to die from exposure to the bitter cold. As they went out into the darkness, this chant rang in his ears: "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, claim for Thee the victory and from Thee the crown."

The commander waited throughout the night on shore near a roaring fire, hoping some would change their minds and obey the imperial decree. Finally, he saw a solitary figure groping his way toward the fire. Approaching the emperor's statue, the half-frozen man fell down before it. Only one man returned but no one else appeared! The centurion was so moved by the steadfastness of the 39 remaining men that he dropped his armor and rushed to join that dying band. In a few moments the cry again was heard echoing across the frigid wasteland: "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, claim for Thee the victory and from Thee the crown."

Those who are martyred for Christ's cause and who endure Satan's temptations will receive this crown of life.

## 2. The crown of incorruption (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)



This crown has been called the "runner's crown" and it focuses on the joy of victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 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 (crown). 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.”

Some have suggested that this is simply a general statement concerning the concept of crowns (rewards) and the crown mentioned here is not a specific crown. I disagree with this conclusion for several reasons. First, the other crowns of Scripture are singled out as specific crowns (rewards) given to Christians. It would be no different in this case. Second, each crown had a specific requirement or explanation attached to the person who receives it. The same would be true here. This requirement relates to disciplining one's body and life and to persevere in victory. The person who does this will receive this specific and special crown. This crown relates to those Christians who consistently live victoriously instead of in defeat.

Two sports illustrations are given that portray victory.

a. A runner (24-26a)



Paul speaks of this runner's crown (reward) in a setting that pertains to our victory in Christ. The Christian life is comparable to a race that must be won on a daily basis so in the end you will be seen to be a winner instead of failure.

1. Racing is required – 24a

The Christian life is like a race. It requires self-discipline. It calls for strenuous effort. It demands a definite purpose. The question we need to ask ourselves is this: Are we in the race? Are we on the race course or are we sitting in the grandstands eating sausage sandwiches and drinking diet coke?

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.”

Get in the race by committing yourself to Jesus Christ and His way of victory for your life. If you are living a defeated Christian life it's because you are no longer in the race.

## 2. Winning is primary – 24b

I once saw a T-shirt which read, “We did not just come here to race; we came to win.” The Corinthians would have been familiar with the Greek Olympic Games as well as their own local Isthmian Games. Knowing this, Paul used a metaphor very close to their experience – a prize. Of course, the “prize” mentioned in this verse is not salvation but a reward for faithful service. Salvation is nowhere stated to be the result of our faithfulness in running the race (Eph. 2:8-9). We don't run the race in order to get to Heaven. We run to gain reward in Heaven. The “prize” refers to the “incorruptible” crown that we will receive in the coming day if our lives have been characterized by victory over sin, Satan, and self.

The verse does not suggest that in the Christian race only one person can win the prize. When it says “but one receiveth the prize” (vs. 24) it simply teaches that we should all run to be winners. We should all practice the same kind of self-denial that the apostle Paul himself practiced. If we possess a consistent life of victory over the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21), we are promised this crown or reward when Jesus returns. Again, no child of God is perfect in their living but as we apply God's armor to our lives and live victoriously in the strength of the Lord (Eph. 6:10-17), we will possess greater victory, live life on the higher plane, which will result in experiencing this promised crown.

The Bible gives us great encouragement and incentive at this point: “So run, that ye may obtain.” Run! Run! Keep running. Don't give up. There is a crown to receive someday. There is a finish line! Stay on

the race course. Don't quit! Don't throw in the towel. The runner's crown awaits you at the end of the finish line!

### 3. A battle is raging - 25

The understanding of the phrase "striving for the mastery" is one word in the Greek from which we derive our word agony. The word speaks of entering a contest and contending or struggling with our opponents or those who are running against us. Our opponents in the race are the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are in a battle against sin and hell itself. Wake up and smell the coffee! Wake up!

Ephesians 6:12

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

D.M. Panton

"To identify oneself with the truth is to place one's self in the heart of a storm from which there is no escape for your life."

### 4. Control is necessary – 25a

In the struggle of this contest, we are victorious by becoming "temperate in all things" (possessing self control in every detail of our lives). We are to control our sinful nature and the lustful desires or cravings that it produces to dominate our lives. The way of victory is given to us, now we must apply it to our lives and live victorious. The obvious point is this; an athlete must be disciplined if he is to win the prize.

Have you ever watched those Olympic skiers? They come down that hill at very high speeds and attempt to cut every corner as close as they can and not elevate themselves too high off the ground. Why? It's because they must possess discipline in some key areas if they are going to win the race. Runners are careful what they eat. They don't frequent MacDonald's in order to eat high fat foods. Why? It's because they are disciplined and want to be in top health and shape for their athletic contests.

## 5. Payday is coming – 25b

“Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible (crown).” Paul draws upon the picture of the games in his day to paint the spiritual picture of our eternal reward. In the biennial games near Corinth the “crown” was a pine wreath given to the winner. However, this kind of wreath withers away and dies. However, the runner’s crown that we can receive as a Christian at the Judgment Seat of Christ will never fade away because it is termed “incorruptible.” Our reward that we receive at the coming of Christ is eternal. It will last forever and forever throughout the eternal ages of time.

Only one runner could win the olive-wreath crown in the Greek games, but every believer can win an incorruptible crown when he stands before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This reminds how important it is to live wisely during this life and go along in life with eternities values in view.

“Just a tiny little minute  
Only sixty seconds in it.  
Forced upon me  
Can’t refuse it  
Didn’t seek it  
Didn’t choose it.  
But it’s up to me to use it  
Give account if I abuse it.  
Just a tiny little minute  
But eternity is in it!”

We will receive a reward that will never pass away. It will be an ageless reward that we will enjoy while eternity rolls. Paul concludes by stating, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly” (not with doubt or lack of confidence – vs. 26). Instead, Paul possessed determination and zeal to finish the race. He is not just playing around with this thing. He is not playing church. This is real.

Beloved, eternal reward is real and we only have one shot of earning it. The opportunity is during this life. Paul is determined to win the race and receive the prize! There is no uncertainty (doubt or lack of

confidence) in what he wants to do. He wants to win! He wants to pass over the finish line and receive the prize. Do you? Are you really concerned about reward? Does it make any difference to you? Does it really matter to you? It should matter to us when we stop and contemplate how these crowns will be experienced throughout eternity in relationship to our lives and how our reward will glorify Jesus Christ.

a. A boxer (26b-27)

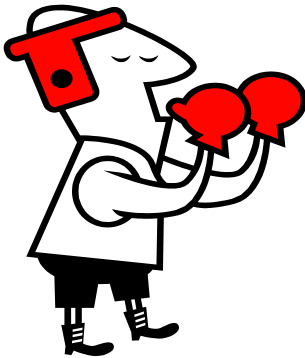
1 Corinthians 9:26b-27

“...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.”

Paul uses the second illustration of a boxer by stating: “so fight.” I suppose we could also call this the boxer’s crown!

Two types of boxers are mentioned.

1. A shadow boxer – 26b



The next sports illustration is speaking of a boxer (“so fight I, not as one that beateth the air”). This particular athlete was known as a shadow boxer. Shadow boxing means to go through the motions of boxing, as a training or conditioning exercise, without any real opponent. In other words, it did not involve a real battle situation. It was only a practice and the boxer was fighting an imaginary enemy. He was beating at his own shadow.

Beloved, we don’t have time to practice! We must jump right into the battle and put up our boxing gloves. The enemy is very real. We are in a real “fight” or battle. Stop pretending everything is okay; it’s not.

- Sin wants to attack you.

Genesis 4:7 reminds us that “sin lieth at the door” and is personified as a crouching wild beast waiting to pounce upon our lives.



Romans 7:11 paints a similar picture of sin:

“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”

Billy Sunday, the baseball evangelist and reformer, never spared himself nor those he wanted to help in the vigor of his attacks on sin. He thundered against evil from the 1890's through the Great Depression. He preached Christ as the only answer to man's needs until his death in 1935. “I'm against sin,” he said. “I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, and I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll butt it as long as I've got a head. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. When I'm old and fistless and footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to Glory and it goes home to perdition.”

- Satan wants to trick you.

Ephesians 6:11

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

The word “wiles” speaks of the devil's tricks or schemes that he seeks to use against us, to destroy our lives and keep us in the defeat mode. The devil has a bag full of tricks that he tries to use against us to bring us down spiritually.

Both the sin nature and the devil are out to get us! This all means that we are in a battle for which there is no escape.

1 Timothy 6:12

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

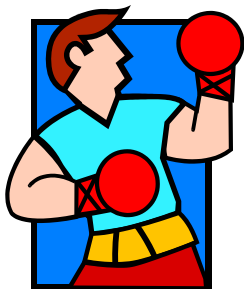
You can't win the battle by shadow boxing, by not believing in a real enemy and not entering a real battle with the determination to win. Some of you don't even realize that there is a real battle going on which revolves around the issue of controlling your life. You are living aimlessly, shadow boxing, as if there is no real enemy to defeat. You are living in the defeat mode and have excused or overlooked your

sin of disobedience. In essence, you are flinging your gloves in the air not really believing that you need to counter a real enemy. You are not serious about doing battle with sin and the enemy of your soul. This is why you remain in your disobedience and defiance against God.

When I think of boxing aimlessly (“as one that beateth the air” – 1 Cor. 9:26), I remember one of those old “Three Stooges” movies. Curly is trying to fight a strong man inside the ring and the strong man had his one glove on his head and Curly is swinging his boxing gloves to his side over and over again but missing the mark every time. What is the lesson behind this illustration? Don’t be a Curly, don’t be a stooge when it comes to the battle! Fight with the goal to win every battle.

This type of fighter (a shadow boxer) is used to illustrate that we should never enter the spiritual battle over sin and Satan in a careless, unbelieving, or lackadaisical manner. We **MUST** believe the enemy is real and not a shadow! Also, there must be no wasted time or energy. We must understand that there is a real enemy that is against us, that sin and Satan want to defeat us. Since this is true we should live with our gloves facing the enemy and be ready at all times to do battle with a real sin nature and a real devil.

The apostle was not interested in wild misses! Every blow that was struck was meant to land squarely on his opponent’s nose and send him out of the contest. He wanted to be victorious. He was going to stay the course and fight intelligently and faithfully until the cows come home or Jesus returns!



2. A disciplined boxer - 27

a. He possesses self control – 27a

Paul reminds his readers that everyone who competes in the games must exercise self-control in every area of his life (“But I keep under my body, and bring it unto subjection”). The word “keep” means to buffet or literally give yourself a black eye! Of course, Paul

was not teaching the self mutilation of the body. This metaphorically speaks of a disciplined body.

1 Corinthians 6:12

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

There are two important principles for Christian living.

1. Freedom is not always appropriate to express.

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient. If I were raising money to be a missionary and came into church driving a Jaguar car, it would not be an appropriate to do. People might misunderstand. I might have the freedom to drive a Jaguar but it is not “expedient” or suitable.

2. Freedom never leads to bondage and excess.

The Bible says that “all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power (meaning authority or rule) of any.” Some of the brethren and I were talking about nicotine and cigarettes and their addictiveness. One reason I don’t smoke is because nicotine seeks to control my life instead of the Holy Spirit. Nicotine brings me under bondage and keeps me bound unnecessarily to a substance. This is wrong. Some of you might have to put out that last cigarette and start practicing your freedom in Christ. This applies to TV, video games, food, hobbies, lustful pictures, or whatever is controlling your life.

True liberty is not a freedom that brings us under bondage but a freedom that takes us away from bondage. A wrestler once asked his coach, “Can’t I smoke and drink and have a good time and still wrestle?” The coach replied, “Yes, you can, but you can’t win!” In other words, there are many sins that can control us and keep us from having victory and winning the race. We need to be more sensitive to sin and start getting rid of our sinful habits and attitudes if we are going to win the race.

Jesus will sort it all out when we stand before Him but we had better get serious about sin and stop shadow boxing.

b. He remains in the fight – 27b

1 Corinthians 9:27

“... lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Only Greek citizens were allowed to participate in the games, and they had to obey the rules both in their training and in their performing. Any contestant found breaking the training rules was automatically disqualified. The Greek word behind “castaway” is *adokeemos* which means “not approved” (disqualified). Paul is thinking of the judgment seat of Christ where the rewards are given. At the Greek games, there was a herald who announced the rules of the contest, the names of the contestants, and the names and cities of the winners. He would also announce the names of any contestants who were disqualified.

Paul was concerned about something. He was concerned that he would get so busy trying to help others in the race that he would ignore his own spiritual life and find himself disqualified from the race or the fight. Listen, if Paul was concerned about losing reward, we also should be concerned about this. Of course, this has nothing to do from being disqualified from Heaven but being disqualified from receiving the incorruptible crown at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It means no longer qualifying for the crown which Paul was referencing in this passage. Paul knew that it was possible for him to lose this crown by the misdirection and carelessness of his own life. What it takes to lose this crown is not stated. God will sort that out on Judgment Day. But our ambition and desire should be to run sin out of our lives and take time to be holy.

A careful distinction should be made between the prize and the gift. The free gift of justification cannot be the result of good works (Rom. 4:1–8). However, the prize or crown is the reward for endurance and living for Christ faithfully. It should be understood that the disqualified Greek athlete did not lose his citizenship, only his opportunity to win a

prize. The whole emphasis is on rewards, and Paul did not want to lose his reward.

Brother and sister, it's hard for us to contemplate how important it is to be obedient to God and not run off the course or be beaten down by sin and Satan. Our unwavering obedience and undying commitment does matter and will matter to God when we stand before the Lord.

In the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, Ben Johnson of Canada won the one-hundred-meter dash, setting a new Olympic record and a new world record. Our American contender, Carl Lewis, came in second, and most were shocked that he hadn't won the gold. After the race, the judges learned that Johnson had had an illegal substance in his body. He ran the race illegally, so the judges took away his medal. Though he ran faster and made an unforgettable impression, he did not deserve the reward.

Although the world and even our fellow Christians may be impressed with and applaud our deeds, let's not forget that God is the final judge! He searches our hearts; He alone knows our motivation. And He will be the One to say, "Your life deserves a crown or your life does not deserve a crown."

Remember once again that the crowns or rewards are primarily experienced instead of worn on the head (Rev. 4:10). The runner's crown is for those who successfully combat and have victory over the old nature. How will this crown be experienced in relationship to one's life? The description given of the incorruptible crown portrays how each saint, who receives this reward, will experience greater joy and appreciation for their new sinless and untainted body, which they will receive at Christ's coming. It will be an enhanced joy and appreciation for their new body which will no longer possess any of the hard struggles over sin.

The Christian who perseveres in victory during this life experiences an intense struggle and battle with the sin nature and Satan. When you get serious about living in purity and for Jesus Christ you will enter a battle zone. In return for this victorious struggle, Jesus Christ will give a crown (reward) that these believers will experience for

eternity. The reward will focus on a deeper and greater appreciation for their sinless state and glorified body, which they have received at the Judgment Seat of Christ, following their earthly battle. Those who struggle greatly on earth, winning the battles over sin, will be rewarded with a greater appreciation for their sinless body.

In summary, the incorruptible crown focuses on victory in the Christian life. Have you been living the victorious Christian life? Is there some sin that is constantly defeating you? Are there some key areas of improvement and victories that you need to possess? You should make the changes for your own spiritual health and in light of your eternal reward. Those saints who receive this “incorruptible crown” will appreciate their eternal victory in a deeper and richer way, a victory that they will possess in their new body, in Heaven, and throughout the eternal state. Their struggle to maintain victory in this life will translate into great joy and delight in the next life.

In short, those who have fought hard, labored fervently, and remained in the battle (“striveth for the mastery” – vs. 25) will possess a greater appreciation and enjoyment of the victory and untainted life that they will experience throughout eternity. They will enjoy the absolute purity and perfection in their glorified bodies that will come without fighting, toiling, and labor. This is the true and lasting (“incorruptible”) crown that some Christians will receive.

This is why we must run to win! This is why we must fight to the end! We are a spiritual runner in a race against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are also a spiritual boxer fighting to win the battle.

2 Timothy 4:7

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

We are to run and fight to the end and if we do, then we will receive this incorruptible crown. Paul knew that Jesus would reward him accordingly and faithfully as He said. Therefore, Paul wanted to stay on the race track and remain in the fight and die with his boots on.

When Calvin was banished from ungrateful Geneva, he said, "Surely if I had merely served man, this would have been a poor

recompense. But it is my happiness that I have served him who never fails to reward his servants to the full extent of his promise."

Horatius Bonar

"We thank  
Thee for the crown  
Of glory and of life;  
'Tis no poor withering wreath of earth,  
Man's prize in mortal strife;  
'Tis incorruptible as is the Throne,  
The kingdom of our God and  
His Incarnate Son."

### 3. The evangelistic crown (1 Thess. 2:19-20; Phil. 4:1)

**Crown of Rejoicing (Soul Winner's Crown)  
1 Thess. 2:19-20; Phil. 4:1**



**Reward: Experiencing joy when meeting people  
In Heaven who came to Christ through our Gospel  
witness along with an outward display of shining  
(Daniel 12:3)**

This crown has been called the "soul winner's crown" because it focuses on the joy of saved souls. The actual reward focuses on experiencing great joy when meeting people in Heaven who came to Christ through our Gospel outreach.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

"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? For ye are our glory and joy."

This is a wonderful promise that is given to us as God's New Testament saints. Jesus is coming again and His return is imminent. This means it could happen at any moment. At Christ's return we will meet our loved ones (1 Thess. 4:17-18) and all those who have come to Christ through our outreach and evangelistic efforts (1 Thess. 2:19-20). This is going to be a day of glad reunion! There is going to be a meeting in the air someday and we will enjoy the presence of those who have gone on before us, which include our saved loved ones in our personal family, those saints in God's family whom we have served with, and those we have had the privilege of leading to Christ. This is going to be a blessed time of glad reunion!

"Friends will be there  
I have loved long ago;  
Joy like a river around me will flow;  
Yet just a smile from my Savior, I know,  
Will through the ages be glory for me."

The description given of the crown of rejoicing once again centers on enjoyment in the next life. It portrays how each saint, who receives this crown, will experience the joy of seeing souls in Heaven who have come to Christ through their Gospel outreach. Remember that the crowns or rewards are primarily experienced and not worn on our heads (Rev. 4:10). We will in some way be rewarded in relationship to the quality of life and our enjoyment of eternity.

Imagine the joy that believers will experience when they see people in Heaven whom they have pointed to Christ. In fact, we may not always know how effective we have been in our evangelistic efforts in reaching out to people but we may be surprised someday when we get to Heaven and meet people who say, "Thank you for leaving that Gospel tract at that restaurant. Thank you for taking time to tell me about Jesus." We may have never know in this life about their salvation but we will know in the next life!

By this statement he implies or indicates that he would receive a crown for leading them to Christ, while realizing that seeing the people in Heaven, which he had won to Christ, would be his true crown and ultimate blessing ("ye are our glory and joy" – 1 Thess. 2:20).



Philippians 4:1 similarly states:

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

This passage once again links the people that Paul had won to Christ with a crown. Please note how Paul stated that the saints themselves are his true crown - “my joy and crown.” The inference that Paul is once again making is that their presence would be the true crown for him at Christ’s coming. His true crown in Heaven would be the joy of their presence. In essence, Paul is saying, “You are the only crown I really need and want.” Apparently God will give a special joy to Paul and others who receive this crown that will last for eternity. The people Paul had led to Christ will serve as an appropriate expression for the crown of rejoicing throughout eternity.

In summary, the true and lasting crown is not a crown that saints will receive to wear on their heads but the joy that they will receive throughout eternity when seeing people in Heaven that they have led to Christ. This crown emphasizes the wondrous joy that a person will have in Heaven when seeing people there whom they have pointed to Christ. The person who receives this crown will possess a special joy and added blessing throughout eternity for the souls that were saved through their work and ministry. They will experience the joy of seeing saved souls in Heaven whose salvation was made possible through their evangelistic efforts.

Romans 10:14

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

This implication of this verse is that every person on earth must hear and respond to the Gospel message in order to be saved. So much for pluralism! Beloved, you might be the only preacher some people will ever hear! You may be the person God wants to use in reaching some particular lost soul. This is expressed the words of an older song.

“What if someone had not shared with me that Jesus paid for sin?  
What if someone had not shared with me a love from deep within?  
Just for once I met a person who really showed to me  
He cared for my condition as I faced eternity.  
What if someone had not shared with me the simple Gospel plan?  
God please bless that one who shared with me,  
God please bless that man.”

Of course, the joy of greeting believers at Christ’s coming and in Heaven also brings with it a solemn warning. It’s possible to lose a certain amount of joy if we go to Heaven empty-handed without any harvest. If we have not been serving the Lord evangelistically in seeking to reach people, then we will not receive this crown.

“Must I go, and empty-handed,  
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?  
Not one day of service give Him,  
Lay no trophy at His feet?

Must I go, and empty-handed?  
Must I meet my Savior so?  
Not one soul with which to greet Him:  
Must I empty-handed go?

Not at death I shrink nor falter,  
For my Saviour saves me now;  
But to meet Him empty handed,  
Tho’t of that now clouds my brow.

O the years in sinning wasted,  
Could I but recall them now,  
I would give them to my Savior,  
To His will I’d gladly bow.

O ye saints, arouse, be earnest,  
Up and work while yet ’tis day;  
Ere the night of death o’ertake thee,  
Strive for souls while still you may.

“Must I go, and empty-handed?”  
Must I meet my Savior so?  
Not one soul with which to greet Him:  
Must I empty-handed go?”

Those who engage in evangelism through verbal witnessing, handing out tracts, and seeking to win the lost will be presented with this crown or reward. I do not believe the number of souls that come to Christ through our evangelistic efforts is the real issue in the coming day of reward, but our effort and committed faithfulness in reaching out to the lost. We do not always reap in our evangelistic efforts (1 Cor. 3:5-7), but we can be part of the answer to seeing souls saved, if we continue to reach out to the lost. We need to have a heart and longing to see people saved, and actively engage in reaching the lost, if we are going to receive this special crown.

The Christian who has not tried to win others to Christ will not experience this particular glory and joy that Paul speaks about when Jesus Christ returns (“for ye are our glory and joy” – 1 Thess. 2:20). Dear friend, it is not enough to “wait for his Son from heaven” with anticipation (1 Thess. 1:10). We must also witness about His Son (1 Thess. 1:8) and populate Heaven with people through evangelism and following the Great Commission (1 Thess. 2:19-20), so that when we get to Heaven, we will have trophies (saved souls) to present to God for His glory.

The Bible teaches that there is a special joy and reward for the soul winners. Yes, there will be a literal crown and eternal reward received for winning souls to Christ, but the real joy comes when we find people populating Heaven that we have pointed to Christ. This is the true reward that we will experience for eternity. So the emphasis on the crown of rejoicing (the soul winner’s crown) is once again on the enjoyment that we will experience in our hearts and lives throughout eternity by seeing the fruit of our labors (“are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”).

Will we see the faces of those in Heaven that we have lead to Jesus Christ? Will they come up to us and say, “Thank you! I remember the day when you pointed me to Jesus Christ.”

Daniel 12:3 states:

“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.”

This verse speaks of a special reward that is connected with soul winners! If you want a soul-winner’s crown you must be active in evangelism, spreading the seed, and in time you will reap.

Proverbs 11:30 echoes the timeless truth:

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”

We would be very wise if we stay active in reaching out to the lost.

D.L. Moody said:

“If this world is going to be reached, I am convinced that it must be done by men and women of average talent. After all, there are comparatively few people in the world who have great talents.”

The reward for soul-winning will be given to those saints who avidly and persistently are seeking to win the lost to Christ and who sacrifice their time and treasure to see people come to Christ. They are those who have their eyes on the harvest and who want to be part of evangelism and seeing people saved.

In his book *Treasury of Quotations on Religious Subjects*, F. B. Proctor tells the following story about Rowland Hill, a well-known minister in 18th-century England. On one occasion, Pastor Hill was introducing a friend to Dr. Edward Jenner, the physician who had discovered the vaccination for smallpox. In his introduction, Hill commented that the renowned Dr. Jenner had saved more lives than any other man. At this, the doctor turned to Pastor Hill and remarked, "You said I saved more lives than any other man, and that may be true. However, I would rather have it be said of me as it might be said of you, that I saved more souls!"

#### 4. The crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

##### Crown of Righteousness (Watcher's Crown)

2 Timothy 4:7-8



**Reward: Experiencing an inward satisfaction and enjoyment for living a righteous life while on earth (in view of Christ's return) and the visible display of righteousness (Rev. 19:8)**

This crown has been called the “watcher’s crown” since it focuses on faithful living in anticipation of Christ’s imminent return. It involves living a righteous life in view of Christ’s imminent return. It reminds us that Christ’s coming should be a motivational factor that keeps us living a righteous life. At any moment we might be accountable to the Lord, so let’s keep our lives in spiritual order, live a righteous life, do what is right, knowing that at any moment we might be caught up into the air, stand before the presence of the Lord, and rewarded for how we lived our lives on earth.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 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.”

The true reward of this crown focuses on experiencing a deeper and richer appreciation of eternal life in view of one’s suffering in this present life.

- a. The preparation for the crown

Preparation is needed in this life if one is going to receive this crown in the next life. As a Christian we will need to fight, remain faithful throughout his life, and finish well if we plan to receive this specific reward.

There are three steps of preparation.

1. Stay in the fight (the image of a boxer or wrestler)

Stay in the Fight!



Paul speaks of the importance of staying in the fight – “I have fought a good fight.” Like a determined wrestler or boxer, Paul says he must remain in the fight. This is exactly what he had done throughout his journey in life. This is exactly what we must keep doing if we are going to receive this crown. We must realize that we are in

a battle and keep waging war against the enemy. No, we are not deliberately picking fights with the devil but he keeps picking fights with us.

Therefore, we must continue to do battle and maintain a righteous standard of living by not giving in to Satan’s temptations, twisted teachings, and distractions which he seeks to bring our way. Satan wants to steal this crown from us. He wants us to sit down and get out of the fight but we can’t afford to do this without losing the crown of righteousness. When we no longer counter Satan’s punches against our lives, it’s then we become defeated, lose our way, and can set ourselves up for losing this crown. Stay in the fight. Stay in the battle.

Paul’s fight was with the world, the flesh, and the devil. He also fought against false teachers (1 Cor. 15:32) which were an extension of the devil’s plot and ploy to destroy his effectiveness for the Lord. The devil wants us to follow our fleshly desires, become worldly in our overall living, and succumb to false teaching, so we might darken our testimony, effectiveness for the Lord, and in the end, lose our crown.

## 2. Stay on the race course (the image of a runner)

Stay on the race course!



Paul says next, “I have finished my course.” This imagery draws upon the Greek games and running on a racecourse. The entire Christian life is a race against sin and the enemy of our soul – the devil (1 Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1). As Paul wrote, he realized that the strenuous race was nearly over. He had been running on the course and was in

sight of the finish line. Paul realized that he was soon to finish his lifelong race victoriously.

This should be our goal and determination as well. We should want to stay in the race, stay on course, and not become distracted in our godly and righteous living. Satan wants to deprive us of the crown of righteousness when we stand before God.

We must beware that we do not get blown off course as we near the end. I remember driving a 1978 Plymouth Horizon car in Hidalgo Illinois during bad wind storm. It was a very small car and it was blowing the car from one side of the road to the next. This reminds me how God does not want us to be blown off our spiritual course in life. God wants us to remain faithful to Him, His cause, and will for our lives. Why? It’s because Jesus is coming again and a crown of righteousness is promised to those of us who run passed the finish line and finish well.

There are some questions we need to ask ourselves at this point. Have we been faithful in our commitment to righteous living? Are we doing what we know we should be doing? Are we glorifying God with our lives? Are we committed to holiness, righteous living, and purity in our daily relationships and in everything that we do? Have we been sensitive to God’s righteous standard in relationship to the things we choose to do, where we go, and what we engage in? Does our overall life and testimony reflect righteousness? What areas need improvement? Remember there is a crown of righteousness that we can receive in the coming day of reward.

### 3. Keep the truth (an image of a steward)

Keep the Truth!



The third image Paul gives is that of a steward who had faithfully guarded the deposit of his master - "I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). The expression "the faith" refers to what all Christians are to believe and practice. It is not a reference to our personal faith but to the specific truths and standards revealed in the Word of God.

We are called upon to be a steward of God's Word, defending it, following it, and sticking to the truth until we cross the finish line at the end of our lives.

Jude 1:3 adds these words:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

We must remember that we are also called to protect the deposit of truth that God gave to us by teaching and believing wholesome doctrines. However, in our present verse Paul says we are instructed to follow the righteous path that God's Word outlines for us ("kept the faith" – 2 Tim. 4:7). This means we are to have a strong desire and ambition to do what the Bible says, follow its commands and precepts wholeheartedly, and not give in to personal worldliness, compromise the truth in any way, or follow the ecclesiastical ecumenicalism and doctrinal confusion of the last days.

We are a steward of the truth. We are to defend it, stand by it, and follow it at all costs. And it will cost us something! It may cost us friends, fame, and fortune. But it will be worth it all when we see Jesus and are crowned with this reward for living a righteous life.



1 Corinthians 4:2

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

Have you been faithful in your overall living? Have you been committed to the truth, living by the truth, and are you ready to follow it in spite of your feelings, the feelings of others, and in spite of the consequences you might face for doing what is right? Are we ready to do what is right and commit ourselves to righteous living so we might cross the finish line as a winner and receive this crown of righteousness.

b. The promise of a crown

2 Timothy 4:8

“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.”



Paul is given the promise of receiving a crown or reward that is related to his righteous living when Jesus returns for His Church. He believed what God said and anticipated the promised crown for maintaining a righteous life that was based upon the absolute standard of God’s Word and following this truth up to the end of his life. Perseverance pays off!

You will note that Jesus is called “the righteous judge” and He is the one who will hand out the crowns (rewards) at the Bema Seat of Christ. The Lord Jesus will judge wisely and rightly which means that only those who deserve this reward will get it and those who do not deserve the reward will not receive it. Only the righteous judge will determine who receives this crown but one thing is certain; we won’t fool the Lord Jesus Christ when we stand before Him.

Jesus will know those Christians who are living for Him when He returns who are described as those who “love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). These are Christians who will be found manifesting a righteous life in view of their love for Jesus Christ and keeping His commandments (1 John 2:3). Therefore, they will be rewarded or crowned when Jesus returns.

Once again, this reward is called the “watcher’s crown” since it focuses on faithful living in anticipation of Christ’s imminent return. It involves living a righteous life in view of Christ’s return. A watchful and expectant Christian will keep his house and life in order. He will avidly seek to keep himself pure in light of Christ’s return.

1 John 3:2-3

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

How will this crown be experienced and enjoyed throughout eternity? Although we will receive literal crowns to cast as Jesus’ feet (Rev. 4:10), the description of a “crown of righteousness” once again explains this reward as a metaphorical crown rather than a literal material crown. The description given of this crown of righteousness portrays how each saint, who receives this crown, will experience tremendous joy and satisfaction throughout eternity, knowing they have faithfully maintained a righteous life while living on earth.

In verse seven, Paul said that he fought a good fight, finished the course God had for his life, and faithfully kept the truth of God’s Word. He did not compromise the truth, abandon the ship, but finished well, maintaining a righteous life in his conduct and commitment to Christ’s Word and cause. Since Paul accomplished these things he says that he would receive a “crown of righteousness” (vs. 8) at Christ’s coming along with all those who love the appearing of Christ in view of their service and commitment to Christ and His cause.

This is a crown that focuses on fighting right, living right, and finishing right! This crown will be given as a reward for righteousness living.

It's a crown that will be given to those saints who have stood the test and finished the test well. It's a crown that will be given to those who maintain faithful ministry and dedication to the Lord.

Lehman Strauss once shared these words with me:  
"My desire and goal is to finish well."

A chaplain who was ministering to a seriously wounded soldier was requested by the dying man to write a letter to his former Sunday school teacher. "Tell her I died a Christian because of what she taught me in that class in church. The memory of her earnest pleas and the warmth of her love as she asked us to accept Jesus have stayed with me. Tell her I'll meet her in Heaven."

The message was sent, and some time later the chaplain received this reply: "May God forgive me. Just last month I resigned my position and abandoned my Sunday school pupils because I felt my work had been fruitless. How I regret my impatience and lack of faith! I shall ask my pastor to let me go back to teaching. I have learned that when one sows for God, the reaping is both sure and blessed!"

My prayer and desire is that I will finish well! If you compromise in the end you will not receive this crown. You must remain faithful to God's Word and purpose for your life if you are going to receive this crown of righteousness. If we fight, follow, remain faithful, and finish well a crown of righteousness awaits us. Once again, this crown will be primarily experienced throughout eternity, as we sense an eternal inward satisfaction and enjoyment for living a righteous life while on earth. In some ways, more than we think, our life on earth will affect our life in Heaven!

A shepherd and his small dog once came to live in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland. The animal was so loyal to his owner that he followed him everywhere. Sometime later the man died and was buried in the local cemetery. Hardly anyone noticed the little dog trailing behind the mourners; but after they left, he went and sat down on the shepherd's grave. He stayed there not for a day, a week, or a month, but the rest of his life!

Interested people gave him food and water, and he never left the spot where his master had been laid to rest. After 12 years he finally died at his post of vigilance. Now this was faithfulness! Dear friend, we as Christians would show the same kind of devotion to our Lord and Master. If we do, in the end we will receive a crown of righteousness. We will be able to possess the inner joy, satisfaction, and blessing of having lived out a life on earth that will count for eternity.

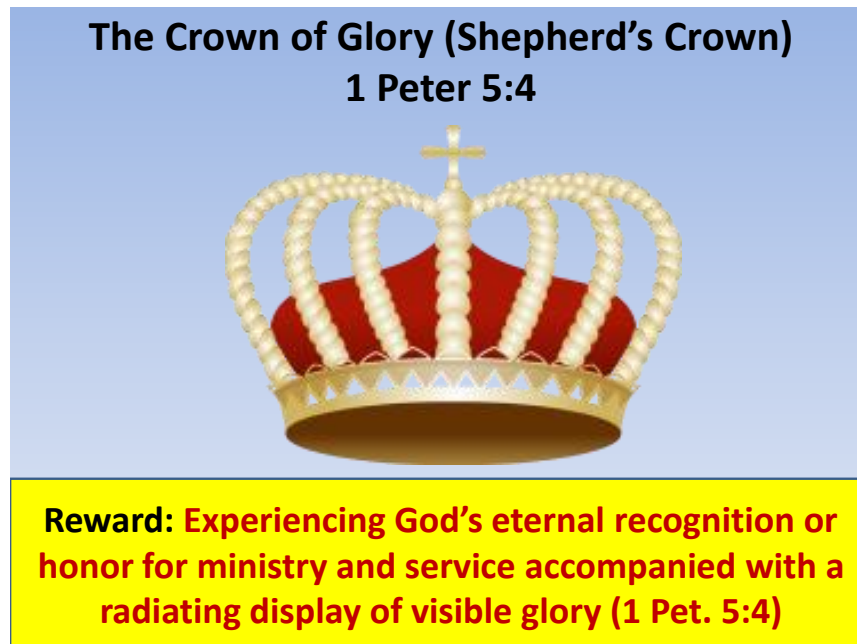
We now move to our final crown in this study. Before we do I must ask you a question. Did you ever hear about the marshmallow test? In the 1960s, Walter Mischel conducted an experiment at Stanford University called The Marshmallow Experiment. The experiment involved testing a group of four-year-olds. Each was offered a marshmallow and promised another, only if they could wait 20 minutes before eating the first one.

The children reacted differently. Some gobbled down the lone marshmallow immediately. Others kept looking at the marshmallow, smelling it, and even touching it, but refrained from eating it. Others sought to distract themselves by singing or walking around until the second marshmallow arrived. Researchers then followed the progress of each child into adolescence and found that those with the ability to wait were better adjusted and more dependable (as determined by surveys of parents and teachers). Those who waited also scored an average of 210 points higher on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

On the other hand, the one-third that could not wait for the second marshmallow continued to demonstrate the lack of ability to control immediate impulses to achieve long-range goals. For example, Ronald Gross cites that when it was time for the big test, they would tend to get distracted into watching a favorite television program. The ability to wait in order to obtain a greater reward has been termed "delayed gratification." It requires one to exercise self-control to say "NO" to something NOW in order to obtain a greater benefit in the future. There is a certain amount of truth to this when it comes to future reward. The more we say "No" to many things in this life the greater gratification there will be in the next life.

The crowns or rewards mentioned in the Bible are the cream of the crop when it comes to rewards given out at the Bema Seat of Christ. They will be the highest possible rewards that Christians can receive. God will reward us for serving Christ Biblically, faithfully, and consistently. These are crowns (rewards) that are given for some specialized service or specific achievement.

## 5. The crown of glory (1 Peter 5:1-4)



This crown is called the “shepherd’s crown” and it focuses on the joy of shepherding the flock of God.

1 Peter 5:1-4

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

The description given of the crown of glory portrays how each saint, who receives this crown, will experience eternal recognition and

honor and how they will be able to reflect Christ's glory in their own body throughout eternity.

This is a crown that is primarily given to faithful shepherds of the flock who feed, tend, and care for the people that God has entrusted to their care. Peter addresses the leaders as "elders" (presbuteros from which we derive the word Presbyterian) and tells them to "take oversight" (episkopeo from which we derive the word Episcopal). The words elder, pastor and Bishop (episkopos) or overseer (1 Peter 2:25) all point to the same office. Elders by name means that they are to be mature men of Christian character who are qualified by the Holy Spirit to provide spiritual leadership in the assembly.

A. The requirements are given (1 Pet. 5:1-3)

In these verses God outlines the requirements that elders must follow if they are going to lead their flocks. If an elder is going to receive a crown or reward for shepherding, he must be faithful in following God's requirements.

Three pastoral requirements are given.

1. They must shepherd correctly ("Feed the flock" – vs. 2)

The word "feed" literally means to "tend as a Shepherd" and suggests that the elders must accurately perform the duties of a shepherd by feeding and caring for the sheep of his flock. Besides feeding, the shepherd's responsibilities include caring, leading, guiding, and protecting. Feeding of course is a primary concern of the Shepherd. He must make sure his sheep are grazing on the green pastures (Ps. 23:1-2) and that they are being taken care of from a spiritual perspective by giving them good food to eat from the Word of God and reaching out to meet their spiritual needs through prayer, Scripture, and discipleship. Actually, pastoring or shepherding includes the duties of feeding, leading, guiding, guarding, and providing for the spiritual needs of those in the church as a shepherd does for his sheep.

Above all else, a good shepherd will make sure the sheep are well fed. Believe it or not, not every shepherd feeds their flock. There are

some pastors who talk about the Bible but they do not actually teach (explain) the truths of the Bible to their sheep or flock (1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2, 24; Titus 1:9). \*\*Teaching involves explaining the Bible to the lives of the sheep so they can be informed about doctrine and discover God's precepts for living.

The faithful pastor is also called upon to preach (declare God's truth and apply it) to His flock (2 Tim. 4:2). Preaching Sharing relational chit-chat sermons is not obeying God's command to teach and preach the word. Riding hobby-horses is not obeying God's command to teach and preach the word. God has commanded that a shepherd be faithful to the text of Scripture, dividing it properly, defending its content, declaring it authoritatively.

Acts 15:35 combines both teaching and preaching as the pastoral responsibility: "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching (explaining the truth in a systematic manner) and preaching (declaring the truth in an authoritative manner) the word of the Lord, with many others also." In summary, a good shepherd will teach and preach God's truth to his flock and make sure they are well fed. The role of every shepherd is to lead the sheep to nourishing green pastures. From a spiritual standpoint the pastor is to bring the sheep to the place where they feed on divine truth. The shepherd is not to seek to please, but to seek to feed. He is not to tickle the ears of people (2 Tim. 4:2-4) but nourish their souls. He is not to offer light meals of milk, but solid food.

Young ministers often visited the great British preacher G. Campbell Morgan to ask him the secret of his success. When someone inquired of him what he told these aspiring pastors, Morgan replied, "I always say to them the same thing--work; hard work; and again, work!" And Morgan lived up to his own advice. He would be in his study every morning at 6 o'clock, finding rich treasures out of his Bible to pass on to God's people.

In addition to feeding, a good pastor will constantly be guiding, guarding, and providing for the spiritual needs of the flock and come to their rescue or aid in their time of need seeking to comfort, console, and restore his people by leading them into the green pastures and by the still waters (Psalm 23:1-2).

Of course, the shepherd can only lead people to the green pastures and still waters but he cannot force them to eat or drink! His ministry is to declare truth, give spiritual advice and direction, but he cannot drive the sheep to eat and drink. They must be willing to follow the shepherd's spiritual leading and guidance.

The duties of an elder are clearly spelled out in Scripture. They are to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), guard (Acts 20:28-30), rule (Heb. 13:7), and shepherd (1 Pet. 5:2) the flock. Shepherding in some measure takes into account the three previous duties but does have a special emphasis on caring for the sheep (1 Thess. 2:7). Today there are a lot of activities that pastors can get involved in and one of the ploys of the devil is to get the pastor doing everything but shepherding the flock. However, God has mandated that the pastor is to be a shepherd that is teaching, protecting, warning, loving, and guiding the flock.

Someone wrote:

“Sheep are prone not to allow you to shepherd easily. They have a way of wandering. They have a way of falling over on their back and can't get back on their feet. They have a way of becoming wounded and when they get wounded they might just give up and die and you've got to be there to attend to them. They have a way of collecting in the grease in their wool all the filth and the dirt that's blowing in the breeze and they constantly have to be tended to. They have a way of allowing flies to lay their eggs around their face and in their wool and to be infested with maggots and you've got to continually be going over them and over them and finding how you can make sure this doesn't happen. It's a tremendously difficult task.”

Shepherding is not an easy task!

2. They must rule correctly (“taking the oversight” – vs. 2 and “neither as being lords over God's heritage” – vs. 3)

I know that many doctrinal statements teach that the congregation rules the church but you will never find that in God's doctrinal statement – the Bible. Actually, the pastor is to rule and guide the church while allowing interaction by His people on various issues and areas of church ministry and life. However, the elder, pastor, or



bishop (they all refer to the same office) is to have oversight of the church affairs. A leader cannot be a leader if he is not allowed to lead and give direction to a church.

The word “oversight” and bishop (overseer) refers to someone who looks over for the purpose of leading. The word “oversight” means that he is a leader which overlooks the work of the ministry and has the privilege to direct ministry and take care of the ministry. The term would connote both a spiritual and physical guardianship of the ministry and flock to which he is called.

You will notice that the shepherd is both “among” the people (vs. 1) but also “over” the people (vs. 2). This can create problems if the sheep do not understand this. Although the pastor is the leader he is still “among” the members of the flock. He must remember that he is only a sinner saved by grace like everyone else and must identify with the people on their level. He is not to be a “holier-than-thou” type of person. However, since he is called to be a leader, the pastor is also said to be “over” the flock. Some people try to emphasize the “among” relationship and refuse to follow the authority of the shepherd. Others want to put the pastor on a pedestal and make him a “super saint” who never mixes with the people.

Wiersbe concludes:

“The effective pastor needs both relationships. He must be “among” his people so that he can get to know them, their needs and problems; and he needs to be ‘over’ his people so he can lead them and help them solve their problems.”

Of course, oversight does not mean the pastor must do everything but he is given the authority to make sure that ministry continues to function Biblically, that it is protected from error, and is moving in a direction that pleases God. An elder is to be in control of what is taking place in a ministry, where a ministry is going, and why things are being done in a certain manner.

Hebrews 13:7

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

Hebrews 13:17

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

The flock over which an elder ruled was probably a house-church. The corporate church in a town or region usually consisted of several house-churches. Therefore, a network of elders was needed as they each served in their specific house church.

Many people wonder how far pastoral rule extends. Well, we have already seen that the pastor was to be the general overseer of the flock providing overall guidance and direction (physical and spiritual leadership) in church life and ministry (1 Pet. 5:2). In the Hebrew passages, the ruling aspect stresses ruling over the sheep from a spiritually standpoint in that every shepherd must give spiritual direction to the sheep and challenge them to live a life that is honoring to God.

Sadly, in many churches today the congregation rules the leaders. This type of government is foreign to the New Testament. The command is unqualified: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.” Elders have the right to rule under God in a spirit of meekness and humility, to determine the direction of the church, to preside over it, to teach the word in it, and to reprove, rebuke, or exhort the saints (Titus 2:15). Everything in the local church rises or falls with leadership. Let us never forget this.

Of course, the pastor is never to rule as a tyrant for the Bible adds “neither as being lords over God’s heritage” (1 Peter 5:2) This reminds every pastor that God’s people are to be treated with dignity and respect. It certainly means that no pastor is to seek to enslave his people with overbearing and legalistic rules. It means he is not to bully them and create fear in their hearts for not meeting certain requirements. The shepherd leads the sheep; he does not drive the sheep!

Leaders are not to rule as tyrants since they do not rule for themselves but for God. The church is “God’s heritage.” It’s Christ’s Church since He has purchased it with His own blood!

In speaking to pastors, another pastor said:

“If we ever view the flock as ‘ours’ or the ministry as ‘ours,’ we are in serious trouble, and so is the church.”

God entrusts some of His flock to the pastor of a church to lead, care for, and feed but it’s always God’s flock. It’s God’s heritage. He is the “chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4) and every earthly pastor is simply an under-shepherd. When a pastor forgets this he can become a troll or tyrant over God’s people.

3. They must minister correctly (“not by constraint”, “not for filthy lucre” – vs. 2 and “ensamples to the flock” – vs. 3).

- a. The motive for ministry

The words “not by constraint (compulsion or force), but willingly” (vs. 2) reveals what the motive of the pastor or shepherd should be. The Holy Spirit provides the burden and ability and the elder must respond with a willing heart. The ministering of the pastor should not be seen as mere duty but delight and joy. His service should not be “I must study or do this again” but “I enjoy studying and ministering to the saints.” Both his calling and service should be done out of a willing heart, without a spirit of reluctance and irritability. We are to possess a “ready mind” (ready to serve!).

Dr. George W. Truett was pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas for nearly fifty years. Often he was asked to accept other positions, and he refused, saying, “I have sought and found a pastor’s heart.” When a man has a pastor’s heart, he loves the sheep and serves them because he wants to, not because he has to.

Peter then reminds us that financial reward must not be the motive for being an elder of an assembly (“not for filthy lucre” – 1 Pet. 5:2). This does not mean an elder may not be supported by the local church since there were “full-time elders” as indicated in 1 Timothy 5:17-18. What this means is that an elder is not to enter the ministry out of greed and for the sake of financial gain.

Many of today's TV preachers, which are paraded across the television screens in our homes, have fallen into this trap. Some men see dollar signs when entering the ministry and they forget that ministry is not about the glitter and gold; it's about ministering to people and seeing lives changed by God's grace.

A Christian leader said:

"The trouble today is that we have too many celebrities and not enough servants."

A pastor's motive must be to serve the Lord as His servant and please the Lord by his shepherding. If a pastor ministers to please himself, or to please people, he will have a disappointing and difficult ministry. Someone once said to a pastor: "It must be hard to keep all these people happy." The wise pastor replied, "I don't even try to keep them happy. I try to please the Lord, and I let Him take care of the rest."

#### b. The manner of ministry

People are willing to follow a leader who practices what he preaches and gives them a good example to imitate. A pastor cannot lead people where he has not been himself.

The manner of the pastoring or ministry is now dealt with. Shepherds are instructed to be "ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3) or examples in their character and conduct. They are live above reproach and meet the qualifications that God has given for pastors (1 Tim. 3:1-7). A pastor who is short-tempered, who tips the bottle, and who tears apart the saints is not qualified to pastor a flock. Pastors are not perfect but they are to have a testimony that is above reproach and an overall life that exhibits godliness and grace. The pastor should be a model of integrity and example to the rest of the flock.

Warren Wiersbe comments on the pastor as a shepherd:

"If a sheep is too rebellious, the shepherd may have to discipline him in some way. If a sheep has a special need, the shepherd might carry it in his arms, next to his heart. At the close of each day, the faithful shepherd would examine each sheep to see if it needed special attention. He would anoint the bruises with healing oil, and remove

the briars from the wool. A good shepherd would know each of his sheep by name and would understand the special traits of each one. It is not an easy thing to be a faithful shepherd of God's sheep! It is a task that never ends and that demands the supernatural power of God if it is to be done correctly."

B. The reward is promised (1 Peter 5:4)

1 Peter 5:4

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

God guarantees that those ministers who serve Him faithfully in accordance with the guidelines of verses 2-3 will receive an eternal reward. When a pastor follows God's guidelines for ministry he is promised a crown or reward from the "chief Shepherd" (vs. 4) who is Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns to rapture away His Church, pastors will be held accountable for the way they have pastored. This is the time they would give account of their stewardship at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Heb. 13:17).

The concept of a crown that never fades away teaches us that our eternal reward will NOT be a physical crown but a crown of glory (receiving a certain amount of honor and recognition) for serving and living for Jesus Christ.

Revelation 4:10 once again states:

"The four and twenty elders (representatives of the entire Church in Heaven, as the term elders is often used of church leaders) fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

At this point in our study, I'd to make some further comments on this verse and how our eternal reward will be visibly displayed throughout eternity. I think this is worthy to comment on and reflect on when studying the subject of eternal reward.



This prophetic teaching in Revelation 4:10 reminds us that our eternal reward, which never fades away, cannot be referring to a physical crown. Yes, we will be given crowns but they will not be worn by us for eternity. We will cast them as the feet of Jesus, where they belong! This is something fascinating that is going to take place in Heaven someday. Every Christian ought to be interested in Heaven and what is going to occur there. This is because they will be there!

There is a difference of opinion as the meaning of these crowns. Some suggest they are the God-given right to rule with Jesus Christ in the coming earthly Kingdom. If this is the understanding of the crowns, the Church will one day take off their crowns, which symbolize their own right to rule, and cast those crowns at His feet. They saint of the Church will confess with joyful abandon that only Jesus Christ has the right to rule.

Others suggest that these crowns are reflective of our initial reward. The Bible promises various rewards for those who faithfully serve Him on earth and some of these rewards are often described as crowns (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 3:11). These may be the crowns (the saint's rewards) that John saw the elders (the Church) lay at the feet of Jesus.

If this is the case, our physical crowns which we receive for living for Jesus Christ and serving Him will NOT remain on our heads as an eternal reward. Instead, the Bible says that we (the Church) will cast them at the feet of Jesus as an act of humble worship, and give them back to the only true One, who should wear a crown. In whatever way we understand these crowns, we discover that we will not wear the physical crowns upon our heads. We will not feel worthy to do this.

Dr. Lehman Strauss comments on this scene:

They (the church) lay aside their given glory to add to His glory, thereby ascribing all glory to Him. They realize that they owe their victory to Him who sits upon the central throne, thus He alone is worthy to receive their crowns. Here on earth we want to get credit for what we do, and while it is true that crowns of reward will be given for faithfulness in service, in Heaven we will recognize that we are not worthy of them. We will lay them at the feet of Him who saved us by His matchless grace. At that day we shall admit that we were unprofitable servants, not even worthy to serve Him.

“All hail the power of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall,  
let angels prostrate fall;  
bring forth the royal diadem,  
and crown him, crown him,  
crown him, crown him,  
and crown him Lord of all.”

What a day this will be! Imagine how wonderful this will be when untold millions of crowns will be placed before the throne of God – at the feet of Jesus! In the Church's actions and words of worship, they indicate that, despite what they may have done on earth to earn these crowns, or the right Jesus gave them to rule with Him, only Jesus Christ is truly worthy of glory and honor. In the presence of the Lord Jesus Himself, all good deeds we have done will pale in comparison. A crown will seem but an insignificant gift to present to the One who gave His life for us (Galatians 2:20).

Sylvanus D. Phelps wrote of this coming day:

“All that I am and have, Thy gifts so free.  
In joy. in grief, through life, Dear Lord, for thee!  
And when thy face I see. My ransomed soul shall be,  
Through all eternity, Something for Thee.”

Something for Thee! That should be why we are serving the Lord today! The elders' response (the response of the Church) is most likely the way we will all respond when we receive our reward from

Jesus. We will be so overcome with so much gratitude because of what He has done for us that worship will be spontaneous.

Casting our crowns at His feet will be the acknowledgment that He alone should receive all of the glory since He is the great and almighty King of eternity! Casting these crowns at the feet of Jesus is acknowledging that He deserves the right to receive worship and emphasizes our willing subjection to the King of the ages. The hymn writer depicted this scene with the words:

“Crown him with many crowns,  
the Lamb upon his throne.  
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns  
all music but its own.  
Awake, my soul, and sing  
of him who died for thee,  
and hail him as thy matchless king  
through all eternity.”

Revelation 3:11

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take (away) thy crown” (reward).

This does not refer to a reward we have already acquired, but a reward we otherwise could have received, had we been more faithful and committed. This is referring to something we could have acquired had we lived better and served better. We allow people to steal our crowns or rewards when they sidetrack us from living for Jesus Christ and following His will for our lives. They become crown stealers when they take away a crown or reward that we could have otherwise received, had we stayed the course, and kept on living for Christ.

Christians should live with eternity’s values in view and remember a day of reward and reckoning is coming. A day of crowning and compensation lies ahead! Jesus is coming again!

2 John 1:8

“Look to yourselves (watch out!), that we (both John and his people to whom he writes) lose not those things which we have wrought (the



truth that was taught by the apostles), but that we (together – both John the elder and the lay people) receive a full reward.”

Losing the truth results in a loss of reward which we otherwise could have acquired had we been more faithful. This speaks of a reward we might have possessed in the future, if we had not followed false teaching, been sidetracked in life, and lost our way.

It should be noted that the phrase which speaks about being rewarded fully shows that some failure by the readers would not totally deprive them of all of their reward. God would not forget what they had done for Him (Heb. 6:10). Since God will not forget our labor of love (reward us for this) we can be sure that we won't lose reward what we have already required. However, the fullness of their reward (1 Cor. 3:11–15) was threatened by following false teaching in some measure and becoming unfaithful to the Lord.

Folks, it really does pay to follow the truth and serve Jesus!

Here is the point. If we are going to cast our crowns (our rewards) at the feet of Jesus, we must realize that our rewards are going to be experienced in another way. Peter gives us some insight on this in 1 Peter 5:4, when he mentions how the pastor's reward will be associated with glory – not a physical crown.

We do know that a day of reward is coming. This is not a true story but it does make a good point for all the preachers to think about. After a preacher died and went to Heaven, he noticed that a New York cabdriver had been given a higher place than he had. "I don't understand," he complained to St. Peter. "I devoted my entire life to my congregation." "Our policy is to reward results," explained St. Peter. "Now what happened, Reverend, whenever you gave a sermon?" The minister admitted that some in the congregation fell asleep. "Exactly, " said St. Peter. "And when people rode in this man's taxi, they not only stayed awake, they prayed."

What does Peter mean when he speaks of the reward of “glory” that never fades away? First, the word “glory” can have the sense of possessing dignity, honor, exaltation, and praise that Jesus gives to faithful pastors. The Bible does speak about Christ giving honor to

those who are faithful in serving Him. There is a sense where a pastor's future "glory" is linked to his received dignity and honor. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Pet. 5:1). Part of the coming and future "glory" (dignity, honor, praise, recognition) that faithful pastors will share together is to be honored for their work for Christ. Their reward may be to experience unending (fadeless) honor and recognition for what they have accomplished for Jesus Christ.

Although there will be the glory of Heaven and a redemptive body, pastors will also share in the glory that is associated with honor and recognition for faithfully serving Christ. This is what the word "glory" likely suggest in the context of pastoral reward. Faithful Pastors will receive a sense of recognition and honor given to them by Christ. This in return will be their eternal reward that never fades away.

Jesus taught and promised in Revelation 3:5:

He that overcometh (CONQUERING = those who live a victorious life) the same shall be clothed in white raiment (CLOTHING = glistening bright raiment which is also depicting one's eternal or fadeless reward – more on this later); and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life (CONFIRMATION of one's salvation), but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels (CONFESSION that relates to receiving honor in Heaven).

Perhaps part of the eternal reward ("the crown of glory") that faithful pastors will receive will be an INWARD sense and satisfaction that God is eternally honoring them for serving as a faithful pastor or shepherd. This will bring blessing and joy to the hearts of faithful pastors. It will be a "glory" (honor and recognition) that will never fade away! There may be a "glory" (doxa = a sense of dignity, honor, praise) that faithful pastors will experience in their hearts for eternity. As a result, they will experience great joy and spiritual blessing throughout eternity.

Second, the word "glory" (1 Peter 5:4) can also suggest something that is OUTWARDLY radiant or shining. It can refer to an outward glory or radiance such as Christ's radiating brilliance emanating from

His body (Rev. 1:16; Matt. 17:1-3). Revelation 1:16 says that Christ's "countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

The second understanding of the word "glory" (SHINING) is evidently the outward result of the inward glory or honor received by the pastors. I think reward will be experienced both inwardly and outwardly. What may be realized and experienced as an inward realization of honor or glory, passed on to us as a reward from Christ, will evidently be displayed in an outward manifestation of this same glory (shining).

The Bible also teaches that God's saints will in some measure "shine" and emanate forth from their own glorified bodies a certain amount of radiant "glory" (outward, visible display of dignity, honor, praise, recognition). The word "glory" can have this understanding. It can speak of splendor, brightness, and shining which is associated with honor and dignity.

Paul, reminiscing about seeing Jesus Christ, said in Acts 22:11:  
And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

Since all of Heaven will proclaim: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power" (Rev. 4:10), it would seem that any glory that we can experience in our own hearts and lives, or visibly display in reward, will be the privilege and ability to REFLECT Christ's own glory through our own eternal, glorified bodies. It seems that the glory that we will manifest will likely be a reflection of Christ's own glory.

Peter may also be teaching that the pastor's eternal reward will be displayed as the ability to shine forth or radiate Christ's glory from their own glorified body. I don't want you to miss this. It's exciting to realize that we will be rewarded according to our living and service for Christ and this reward will be evidenced and reflected in our degree of shining.



This is not the six-million-dollar man! I am not preaching science fiction but Scripture. Eternal reward and shining are connected together in the Bible. Therefore, “the glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4) is something we should all be very interested in as God’s saints. This is something we are going to experience throughout eternity. We have mentioned this “shining” aspect of reward in the previous crowns, but now let’s explain it further, since it will be a focus of our eternal reward.

Daniel 12:3 links reward with shining:  
“And they that be wise shall shine (reflect light) as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”



The Bible is not teaching that we become a star in the next life! That is Hollywood stuff! We will “shine as the stars” (Daniel is making a comparison) which means that our eternal reward will be associated with an ability to shine or radiate a certain amount of glory (honor and recognition) throughout the eternal ages.

This same shining is also promised the saints in relationship to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (the 1,000-year reign of Christ over the earth).



Matthew 13:43  
“Then shall the righteous shine (be illuminated) forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Shining is often associated with reward and the future state. This is rather intriguing to think about and sheds some revelation on how reward will be experienced throughout eternity.

This “glory” (indicating a sense of dignity, honor, praise, recognition) that is experienced by pastors or elders, which is what that Peter is talking about (1 Peter 5:4), will not only be experienced INWARDLY, as they reflect on the honor and recognition that is given to them by Christ, it will also be experienced OUTWARDLY in one’s ability to reflect and radiate glory (brilliance and brightness) from their own eternal body. This brilliance or shining will evidently be a reflection of the glory and honor that Christ has given to us for serving Him faithfully and living for Him.

We don’t become stars, suns, and shining angels in the next life, but the Bible does reveal that we will be able to reflect our reward in the amount of outshining or brilliance that emanates forth from our glorified body.

Revelation 21:23 reveals this about Heaven:

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Truly, Heaven is all about the glory of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ!

“The bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear Bridegroom’s face;  
I will not gaze at glory  
But on my King of grace.  
Not at the crown He giveth  
But on His pierced hand;  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Emmanuel’s land.”

What I’m about to say is very important. Since the Lamb receives all the glory in Immanuel’s Land and His light or brilliance overtakes all of Heaven (Rev. 5:12-13; 21:23), it would seem that the level of reward that individuals receive (including the pastors) will be reflected in their ability to radiate Christ’s glory – not their own. Apparently our

measure of reward will be visibly portrayed by the way that we can reflect the glory of Jesus Christ.

What greater reward and joy could we have than to glorify Jesus Christ as we reflect His glory and demonstrate it to others throughout eternity! This will result in great satisfaction and fulfillment for every faithful pastor and all saints in the measure of their reward that they receive. Pastors in a special way will be able to reflect Christ's glory (1 Pet. 5:4) and this will be a crown (reward) that will bring wonderful joy and satisfaction to their lives throughout the eternal ages of time.

1 Peter 5:4

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

The Greek word for “fade away” relates to the amaranth flower, which does not lose its beauty and therefore symbolizes immortality. The flower was said to be eternal because it never withered or faded, and when plucked off revived (if moistened with water). It was a symbol of perpetuity and immortality.

Everything we have today fades over time and begins to lose their glory. Our clothing, cars, and even our cash! However, we have discovered that our reward will never fade away, the reward of being able to REFLECT Christ's wonderful glory.

Today a Christian may labor for many different kinds of personal rewards. Some work hard to build personal empires; others strive for the applause of men; still others seek promotion in their church. All of these things will fade one day but not the eternal reward that we receive for staying faithful to God's truth and following His Word.

Peter says that it will be a glory that “fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:4). Yes, every Christian will share Christ's glory when we are glorified and fitted for eternity (1 Pet. 5:1; Rom. 8:18) but those pastors who have faithfully served will receive a special “crown of glory” or a special reward that will enable them to share and represent Christ's glory in a great and magnificent way. They will be able to reflect the radiating glory of Jesus Christ in a greater way and share this glory through their own glorified bodies.

The shining associated with reward seems to be linked to all of the saints (not just pastors) in the day of reward. In general, the saint's radiant shining is depicted in the way they are dressed following the Rapture and her marriage to Christ.

Revelation 19:8

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”



This is a prophetic picture of the official marriage of the Church with Christ in Heaven! This is the Bride's (Church's) wedding garment being portrayed here. It's a garment reflecting her eternal reward.

The expression “clean and white” indicates that it will be a shining garment that reflects our eternal reward. The word “white” literally means something that is bright and

brilliant and connotes a shining garment that is likely comparable to white light.

The 1611 KJV text reads “righteousness” which is often interpreted by preachers as that righteousness of Christ which is imputed to the saints. While this is a sound doctrine, the Greek word is actually plural and is referencing the righteous deeds or acts of the saints. The Church has already been clothed (garbed) in the righteousness of Christ at her time of salvation (Rom. 3:25-26). We already wear this garment! Thank God that we do!

The text can literally read, “righteousnesses of the saints” and speaks about the visible reward that the saints will receive following the Rapture as evidenced in their glistening robes. Here, in Heaven, the Church is now seen to be robed in a beautiful, glistening garment, which reflects her righteous deeds. Salvation is not in view in this passage but the righteous deeds of the saints is being expressed. The saint's righteous lifestyle will be reflected in a shining, brilliant,

white garment and this reflection of Christ's glory will be the eternal reward of the saints.

Samuel Hoyt seems to agree with this analogy:

"This reward perhaps involves the capacity to reflect the very righteousness of Christ in greater measure."



Apparently there will be varying amounts of glory for all the saints in Heaven and even on earth during the Millennial Kingdom (the 1,000-year reign of Christ).

I replaced all my old bulbs with new LED bulbs. It does save on electric. I have different watt bulbs in different locations of my house. Some are 40, others 60, 75 and my favorite ones are the 100 watts. You know, we are

going to shine for eternity with recognition and reward. But how much wattage and shining we will portray in our eternal reward will be directly affected by how we lived for Jesus Christ today and served Him. One thing is certain; Peter said that the glory (this honor, praise, recognition, and dignity) will never fade away!

The half has not been told about Heaven, our eternal reward, and how it will be displayed throughout eternity! But we are given a glimpse of what it might be like for each one of us. Friends, it really does pay to live for Jesus Christ and serve Him! It will pay to be faithful to the Chief Shepherd!

Think of this! We are preparing our wedding robe today for the future day! We are already preparing our future glory, recognition and reward by the way we are living, giving, and serving the Lord.

James M. Gray, writing in the Sunday School Times, said:

When Andrew Bonar made his first and only visit to America, they gave him a farewell meeting in New York. Several men eulogized



him, and one man in closing said, "Think of the 'crown of righteousness,' which is laid up for Andrew Bonar, 'which the Lord, the righteous judge,' shall give him in that day." Dear old Andrew Bonar walked to the front of the platform and held up his hands toward Heaven and completed Paul's saying to Timothy: "and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Here are some reflective thoughts:

- What kind of robe will you be wearing in the coming day?
- The amount of reward that you receive will be reflected in your radiant robe, which reflects Christ's glory!
- In some measure, we are preparing today the person we will be for all eternity.
- We should take living for Jesus Christ seriously.

Jesus said in Revelation 22:12

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Something for Thee! This should be why we live for Jesus, and want to honor Him with our actions and lives today.

"I wonder have I done my best for Jesus,  
Who died upon the cruel tree?  
To think of His great sacrifice at Calvary!  
I know my Lord expects the best from me.

The hours that I have wasted are so many  
The hours I've spent for Christ so few;  
Because of all my lack of love for Jesus,  
I wonder if His heart is breaking too.

How many are the lost that I have lifted?  
How many are the chained I've helped to free?  
I wonder, have I done my best for Jesus,  
When He has done so much for me?"

Yes, there will be crowns for Christians. Will you receive a crown when Christ returns to examine the faithfulness of His Church? These crowns or rewards will be experienced by believers throughout the

ages of eternity. They refer to a quality of life that will be granted to faithful believers.

Paul Benware, writing in “The Believer’s Payday,” makes this observation from 1 Peter 5:4: “How the crowns will be translated into actual privilege and reward in the coming kingdom is not explained. Undoubtedly it will be grander and more amazing than anything we can presently imagine.”

Amen! We are given some insights on the way we might experience our eternal reward, but the half has not been told!

After the Crimean War, a great celebration was held in London to honor the heroes wounded in battle. Queen Victoria was present to give out the medals. Some of the soldiers appeared with empty sleeves, some came on crutches, and some had bandaged foreheads. To each she gave the same sweet smile and the same high award. At last, a terribly maimed soldier was brought before the Queen on a litter. His arms and legs were gone. He had sacrificed even more than the rest. At the sight of him the Queen, with tears streaming down her cheeks, stepped forward and pinned a medal on his uniform. Then stooping down, she kissed his brow and said with great emotion, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Dear friend, this should be the very thing that every pastor should want to hear from the Savior when He returns. A pastor’s ministry and life should reflect a burning desire to be faithful to the end so that the Lord Jesus might honor and reward him.

“Glad day, glad day!  
Is it the crowning day?  
I’ll live for today, nor anxious be;  
Jesus, my Lord I soon shall see.  
Glad day, glad day!  
Is it the crowning day?”

[See Chart Summary of Crowns](#)