

The Believer's Crowns

Jerry E. Smith, Ed.D.

The apostle Paul serves as an inspiring example of Christian commitment, faithfulness and servanthood to all believers in Christ. In fact, Paul was so convinced that his life was an example of fruitful Christianity that he exhorted the Corinthian church to follow him as he followed Christ (I Cor. 11:1)!

Amidst the tremendous opposition and persecution Paul encountered, he pressed on, looking not at those things which are seen but at those things which are not seen. He knew the trials of his faith were temporary. He also knew there was unseen, glorious, eternal reward available to him at the conclusion of his earthly pilgrimage. Paul said, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. **So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal**" (2 Cor 4:13-18).

Paul knew there was eternal reward for temporal obedience. His life was motivated by the expectation of receiving eternal reward for his efforts in Christ. Furthermore, he taught that these rewards were available to all believers and that the "Crowning" would occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 5:10). In Paul's teaching regarding the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:8-15), we learn that:

1. Every believer will be rewarded according to his own labor.
2. We are God's fellow workers for rewards, not for salvation.
3. We are to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, the Chief Cornerstone.
4. We are to choose to build with eternal materials: gold, silver, costly stones...
5. The judgment of the believer's works will determine reward or loss of reward.
6. Salvation will not be the issue. The fruit of salvation will be the issue.

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As we've learned, the New Testament speaks of five Crowns as eternal reward available to believers. Thus far we've studied the Crown Incorruptible (Wreath Imperishable) and the Crown of Life. The third Crown in our study is the...

CROWN OF REJOICING

I Thes 2:19-20 "For what is our hope, or **joy, or Crown of Rejoicing?** Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."

To whom did Paul write these words?

What was Paul's relationship to the Thessalonian church?

Who is Paul's Crown of Rejoicing?

The word rejoice means to feel and express great joy or delight, to experience happiness, pleasure, joy, elation, jubilation...

Phil 4:1 "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, **my joy and Crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved"**

Who is Paul's joy and crown in this passage?

What role did Paul play relative to the Thessalonian and Philippian churches?

What is the Christian's greatest source of joy?

Who, therefore, receives the Crown of Rejoicing?

The **Crown of Rejoicing, the Crown of Joy** is given to soulwinners. Now, and throughout eternity, those you led to Christ will bring joy and rejoicing to you.

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1 Thess 2:8 (NIV) We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

What was Paul's motive toward the Thessalonians?

2 Cor 5:18-19 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

You might say, as I would, that "I'm not a fruitful soulwinner." As a reminder, I must say, "We are soulwinners." Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me..." (Acts 1:8).

As believers we are witnesses to Christ. It may be that our one-to-one sharing of the gospel is not a common occurrence, but consider these passages:

2 Cor 3:2-3 (NIV) You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

1 Peter 2:11-12 (NIV) Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Luke 16:9 (NIV) I (*Jesus*) tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Dan 12:3 (NIV) Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens,

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4

and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.