



THE

CROWNS



'But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.' Hebrews 11:6

'Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Hebrews 12:1-2

God is a very generous rewarder of those who diligently seek Him and are faithful in this journey of life and our walk with Him. The Bible tells us that part of what Jesus kept in mind during His earthly journey was the joy waiting for Him, so He understands the power of having something to look forward to. Specifically, there are crowns that were listed in the Bible which will be given to those who meet certain conditions.

This series we are looking at five crowns which we pray will encourage us to keep running this race with endurance. This series we will also include some reflection points which we encourage us all to thoughtfully consider as we wrap up the year and plan for the year to come.

May the holy Spirit open our minds and hearts and help us on this journey so we all finish strong.



Day 1

The Crown of Life

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” James 1:12

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Revelation 2:10

The Crown of Life is reserved for those who persevere under trials because of their faith. We may ask ourselves: why should believers go through trials and persecution in the first place? The truth is we are in a constant battle and though we may not see the actual warfare with our physical eyes, it is very real (Eph 6:12). We also know that Jesus is our model and He explained to us already that if the world hated Him, then we shouldn't be surprised if we are hated by the world as well (John 15:18-25). As a result, we will face many challenges while here on earth, but Jesus promises us a reward for staying faithful in spite of the trials.

'You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.' I John 4:4

'We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.' Romans 5:3-5

Nowadays we may not necessarily be thrown in prison for our faith (though that may still happen in some parts of the world), but our trials may take a different form – either at work, school, neighborhood, or through systems because of our faith. However, because we have the Holy Spirit, we understand that these trials don't actually have the power to break us, rather they become tools to make us stronger.

Reflect: The Lord is telling us to stand strong and keep standing. The world may not love you Child of God, but your father in heaven does, and He's promising you an eternal reward for staying faithful in spite of the trials.

Prayer: Lord help me see trials through Your eyes and give me the grace to stand strong.



Day 2

The Imperishable Crown

“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.” 1 Corinthians 9:25

Apostle Paul likens the Christian journey to an athlete running a race with the aim to win. Because of this aim, athletes are strict with their diet, spend a lot of time in training/practice to perfect their skills, often forfeiting leisure time with friends and family in order to devote time to their craft. If you were to review the habits/lifestyle of any successful athlete, you will see that the level of focus they place on developing and improving themselves daily is immense, regardless of how naturally gifted they may be. All this, to win a prize that will not last for all eternity.

'and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.' 1 Peter 1:4

Armed with the understanding that the prize we will win is eternal, how then are we to run this race and what mindset must we adopt in our walk with God. Too often we can be somewhat laid back and casual about our journey, however we can't expect to have a consistent close walk with God without being very intentional.

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17

Winning athletes also invest in a strong support system that encourages them to constantly get better and keep winning - effective coaches, other focused athletes, keeping the right environment, among others. Nothing is left to chance.

Reflect: When was the last time you set yourself spiritual development goals? And if you have such goals, how disciplined are you about achieving them? When last did you choose to deny yourself so you could spend more time in the things of God, without the aim of trying to get something in return? If you were to score yourself on your attitude toward the things of God, how would you rate yourself? Are you in the race at all, and if you so, are you running to win?

Prayer: Lord help me keep in mind that there is a prize waiting for me that will last for all eternity.



Day 3

The Crown of Righteousness

'There's a crown of righteousness waiting in heaven for me, and I know that my Lord will reward me on his day of righteous judgment. And this crown is not only waiting for me, but for all who love and long for his unveiling.' 2 Timothy 4:8

'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ' Philippians 3:20

The way a person living in transit in a temporary accommodation is often very different from the way that person would live in their permanent home, especially if where they are going is much better than where they currently are and they are able to furnish their permanent home to the highest standards while still in the temporary space. While in transit, we are constantly looking forward to and preparing for the end destination, while making the best of where we currently occupy.

'Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' Matthew 25:3-4

When we look at the parable of the 10 virgins, we see that all were on the same journey and all slumbered, yet 5 were prepared for the long wait and had extra oil handy, the others didn't. Beyond living eagerly, we must also live in constant readiness by the help of the Holy Spirit.

'A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.' Leviticus 6:13

The fire represents the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives which is cultivated daily. As we nurture our walk with Him, He helps keep us on track, pointing out the things in us that need to go, leading us on the path we need to take (Ps 139:23-24) and helping focus our desires on our final home. By living like this, we recognize that our righteousness is from Christ and not in our own natural strengths or works.

Reflect: Are you living prepared?

Prayer: Lord, show me the adjustments I need to make to live prepared and grant me the grace to make them.



Day 4

The Crown of Glory

'Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.' 1 Peter 5:2-4

As Peter spoke to elders in the church about those they have responsibility over, he provided guidelines for service in watching over the flock: willingness, pursuing honesty and transparency, eager to serve and living an exemplary life. He used the terms shepherd and flock in keeping with the way Jesus also described himself:

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11

Jesus chose to lay his life down for us, and while those who have responsibility for shepherding souls may not necessarily have to give up their life, they certainly give up a lot of personal comforts and make a lot of sacrifices to keep watch over the spiritual state of their flock. Good shepherds take responsibility for the welfare of their sheep, guiding them on the right path, bringing them back if they go astray and watching over them, being faithful in their obedience to God concerning those in their care. It is not easy and requires a lot of hard work and commitment and so the Lord recognises those who are faithful in keeping this requirement and promises to reward them with a crown of glory.

'Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.' 1 Corinthians 11:1

'You will know them by their fruits...' Matthew 7:16

The Bible gives us indicators of good shepherds – they actively follow Christ and their lives bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In a time where there's a lot of focus on actions, the Bible reminds us that the true indicator is the character of the person.

Reflect: Take some time today to pray for those who have made a positive impact on your spiritual life.

Prayer: Lord thank you for the godly leadership you have given me access to. Lord grant them revelation, wisdom, grace, endurance and patience, that they may not be found wanting in their assignment and continue to be imitators of Christ.



Day 5

The Crown of Rejoicing

'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?' I Thessalonians 2:19

'Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.' Philippians 4:1

The crown of rejoicing – also known as the soul winners crown – is reserved for those who witness to others and lead people to Christ. This reward is linked to the great commission Jesus gave us in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples of all the nations ('nations' does not mean physical countries/boundaries, but rather people groups). We are expected to act as witnesses for Christ, spreading the good news of the Gospel however the Lord has given us the grace to do so. In return, we are promised a crown of rejoicing.

Proverbs 11:30 tells us that those who win souls are wise and Daniel 12:3 encourages us even more: *"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."*

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10

But how will people call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher (messenger)? Romans 10:14 (AMP)

We are in partnership with God in winning souls, which is why 1 Corinthians 3:9 tells us that we are God's fellow workers. Ultimately it is the Holy Spirit that convicts a person of sin and creates a new being when the person gives his/her life to Christ, but we are the instruments/messengers He uses to open the door for that transformation. God not only gives us the opportunity to partner with Him in bringing people to His kingdom, He also gives us a reward for doing so. With this in mind we know that whatever we do isn't for the applause of men, or the prestige of an office or a title, but to the glory of God who is faithful to keep His promise to us.

Action Step: Think of all the lives linked to you (family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, etc) and ask God for the revelation of your position as a co-worker with Him and to give you the grace and boldness to share the love of God with them in the way He chooses to use you. Remember, a crown awaits you.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the opportunity to partner with You and for the rewards promised.



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