

CROWNS AWAITING THE BELIEVER!

Introduction:

In II Corinthians 5:10-14, we learn from the Word of God that all Christians must appear before the Judgment seat of Christ that we might receive a reward for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be bad.

We need to emphasize that the Judgment Seat of Christ is not related to the revelation of some hidden fault, but rather, the judgment seat of Christ is related to the manifestation of all the deeds that individuals have done after they have become Christians -- whether those things are good or bad.

We need to point out that the word, *bad*, in the text refers not to something sinful, but to something worthless. The evaluation is based upon whether the works that have been done are worth while or whether they are worthless. To a large degree we must submit to the fact that only God knows totally about such things -- and yet the Word of God does give us guidance that we might have reward and not loss of reward. That our works might be worthwhile and not worthless.

Read Revelation 3:7-13 (vs 11)

Note three facts:

- 1) We must realize that after these works are judged, rewards will be given if the works are worthy.
- 2) There will be no rewards if the works are unworthy. I Corinthians 3: 11- 15 says that we will be saved, so as by fire.
- 3) But let me encourage you hearts by reminding you that even though many of us *may lose* the rewards which we might have had, there is something for which God will be able to praise us.

We are told in I Corinthians 4:1-8 that we should judge nothing before the time, until that day. Let the day declare it when God will reveal the motives, the secret thoughts, the hidden thoughts of men in regard to their service, and then shall every man have praise of God.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CROWNS GOD OFFERS:

Rev. 3:11 *"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*

II Tim. 2:5 *"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."*

II John 8 *"Look to thyself, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."*

Rev. 4:10 *"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 saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

THERE ARE SIX CROWNS THAT GOD OFFERS --

A. The Prospect of -- Crowns as Rewards!

1. The rewards which are promised to believers are described in a number of different ways in the Word of God. One of the ways is the use of the word *crowns*.

2. In Revelation 3:11 we are urged that we are to be careful that no one would take our crowns.

I want to remind you that the message was addressed to the church at Philadelphia. If you are familiar with Revelation chapters 2 and 3 then you know the entire history of the church is presented in the names of the seven churches, contained in those two chapters.

The church at Philadelphia is the church which is typical of all true believers, in the midst of the Laodicean church age. The Laodicean church, the seventh church, is the church that is well organized and has great wealth. But God in the person of his Son has departed from it, whereas the church at Philadelphia represents all of the true believers regardless of the name of the building where they might worship.

The church at Philadelphia existed right along side the church at Laodicea. And of special interest to us is that it was to that church, symbolic of the church which was to be living at the very end of the age, that the Lord said, *"Be careful that something does not happen to your crown."*

B. The Offer of Rewards, or Crowns:

1. Certainly, God's Word would indicate that crowns or rewards are important. Are they important to you??? At least they ought to be!
2. Someone might say, *"I don't think we ought to be talking about rewards. We ought to serve the Lord just because we love Him!"* True, but we have every right and reason to consider rewards, or crowns. We have every reason to seek the very best reward that we can when we stand at the Judgment seat of Christ. There is nothing selfish about that for it is thoroughly Biblical.

God made us the way we are for He made us to respond to the incentive of rewards. Paul spoke of this in I Corinthians 9:19-27, and in Hebrews 12:1,2.

3. Rewards were important to Moses -- Hebrews 11:23-26 *"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."*

He had a chance to go with God or to go with the enemy of God and he chose to go with God. You say, Well, why did he? Because he loved God. There is no question about that but the reason that is given in the text is that he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. He weighed the reward! Oh, maybe that seems mercenary but the truth is he weighed the two and although the Pharaoh held out his reward to him He walked with God. ***"For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." He chose God's way, and God's reward!***

4. May you said, *"I don't think we ought to work for rewards; I think we ought to work just because we love the Lord."* It is evident you love the Lord or you would not be serving Him, but there is no reason why you should not keep your eye on the reward. LABOR THAT you do not lose your reward! (II Jh 8; Rev. 3:11)
5. Now the reward should not be the goal of service, per se, but it should be the gauge of Christian living. You should keep in mind that God desires to reward you for serve... so do it as unto Him.

II. THE INCENTIVES FOR GAINING CROWNS GOD OFFERS; (OR REWARDS.)

A. We Labor To be Accepted of Him. II Cor. 5:8,9 (10)

1. No, we are not talking about our salvation for the object of rewards or crowns is not that we win eternal life. Eternal life is God's free gift. You either have it, or you don't have it. There isn't anything you can do about that one way or another, for it is totally in Christ and His finished work and of course your acceptance of Christ as personal Savior.
2. In fact we have a perfect position in Christ and service comes out of that perfect position that we have in Him. (Eph. 1:4-11)
3. What is one of the incentives for *giving our best, surrendering our all, giving it all to Him in total dedication? Why throw yourself totally into the work of the Lord -- REWARDS OR CROWNS!*

MAYBE you say, "*well crowns are not that important, if I just get to heaven that will be good enough. I don't really care about a crown or reward!*"

4. If we say we don't care, then we don't have a very good concept of the **judgment seat of Christ**. You don't really understand what it will be like to be saved so as by fire.
5. Paul said, "*we labor, we give ourselves, we work at it; I work at being accepted of Him while I am in this body and when I stand in His presence. I work at being accepted of Him.*"
6. **For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ** that we may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad.

B. We Labor Because of the Terror of the Lord. vs. 11

1. What is the terror of the Lord? Why should we be concerned about what Paul calls the *terror of the Lord*?
2. Paul spoke of being beside himself (vs 13). You will see that the Apostle Paul was so terrified at the thought of appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ empty handed that he could not abide the thought of being idle.
3. He went out and worked as though it was the only thing he had to do, commending himself to God and to men, persuading men because he knew the terror of the Lord. He labored as some thought, as one who had lost his mind.

C. We Labor Because the Love of Christ Constrains us. vs. 14

1. What marvelous, infinite, compassion love? The love of Christ, of the Father flowing through us.
2. Consider the love seen in the story of the prodigal son. The father, who was waiting, desiring for his wayward son to come to him. This is a portrait of our heavenly Father.
3. His love flowing through us, as His love is in us! He is love! (Eph 3:18-22)

III. STRIVING FOR THE CROWNS GOD OFFERS: OR REWARDS: II Jh 8
"LOOK TO YOURSELVES, THAT WE LOSE NOT THOSE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE WROUGHT, BUT THAT WE RECEIVE A FULL REWARD."

If you are to gain a crown, then you and I will have to strive lawfully. I ask you, as a gauge for your Christian experience, are you abiding by the rules of the game? Do you know what they are? They are laid down in the Word of God.

I want to say to you, no matter how well you run the race, if you do not abide by the rules of the game, you will be disqualified, and there will be no crown for you.

In II Timothy 2:3-5 we read, *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."*

No one entered the athletic games of Paul's day and expect to win the prize unless he was willing to abide by the rules of the game. How about us today! If we are entangled with this world system will we bring forth fruit unto perfection? Will we have rewards or crowns at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

A. Can we escape indifference, or neglect? Heb. 2:1; Heb 2:3

1. Take heed to the things that you have heard, lest you let them slip.
2. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation! To whom is this written according to the context-- saved or unsaved? If for the saved, then what is God saying here? Yes, this is to saved person.

II John 8 in another translation reads, *"Don't throw away all the labor that has been spent on you, but persevere until God give you your reward."*

B. Can we Have a Full Reward and be Careless About Truth?

1. Keep a watchful eye on all the things about you, in order that you may receive the reward that God wants you to have -- that God may be able to give you a full reward. Note in II John 7 he is writing about deceivers.

Remember the context of I John and II John and II John in this regard. They were to walk in truth -- trying the spirits, knowing correct doctrine about Christ, holding to correct doctrine concerning His person. Will people have a reward who are saved and yet stay in liberal churches where false prophets preach, who stand against the virgin birth, etc.? I don't so, how they could?

3. Whoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. II Jh. 9

C. Can We have a Crown (s) and Not serve? Or not use the gift (s) that the Holy Spirit Has Given us?

God has given each one of us gifts -- I Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 12:6-8. Since each one of us have a special gift given of the Holy Spirit, can we have rewards, a crown to lay at His feet and be careless about the use of that gift?

IV. THE NEED OF GUARDING OURSELVES FROM THE LOSS OF CROWNS GOD OFFERS: Rev. 3:11 *"Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*

Will we allow someone else to take our crown? Will we lose that crown out of neglect, carelessness, indifference, outward sinful living, or worldliness?

A. Some one can take your reward from you.

1. Look at the word, *take* it is a translation of a Greek word which can be translated *receive*.
2. Someone else can receive you reward because like Esau, you despised your rights in Christ. He despised his birthright and lost it.
3. We can despise the importance of reward or crowns and someone else can take our place in service and we will have our reward taken from us.

B. You might lose your crown because of false doctrine --false leadership.

Read Colossians 2:16-19. Let no man beguile you of your reward. Let no man take your crown. How can a person be defrauded of his crown? How can a man rob you of your reward? The answer is found in the context -- the principle is that of embracing false doctrine. Allowing someone to talk you into some false teachings.

Try the spirits, whether they be of God! They searched the Word daily to see if those things were so!

1. We must be careful that we are not involved with movements that are man centered, man exalting, lest we serve a man and lose our reward.
2. Our personal motives are also very important. Do we serve to glorify Christ alone?