

II Timothy, Sermon #34

II Timothy 4

Last week we learned: All believers will stand and we will be judged before the judgment seat of Christ according to our works.

- This judgment does not determine whether we go to Heaven or not
- This judgment determines the gain or loss of rewards for our individual living.

So the life and service of the believer will be judged by Christ.

Not everyone will obtain the same rewards. Jesus Christ will determine our rewards based on our works and the spirit in which they were done.

I've entitled today's message "Present Labors, Future Rewards, Part Two."

II Timothy 4:8

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

II Timothy 4:8

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

Present Labors, Future Rewards

The Apostle Paul was at the end of his life – vs. 6-7

- He said he had fought the good fight, finished the course, kept the faith, and that he would be given a crown – vs. 8.
- Paul joyously anticipated this.

No one deserves salvation or Heaven or rewards, yet God has promised these things to His children.

Vs. 8a

A crown was the symbol of victory in a contest, a reward or prize for the winner.

Some of the rewards to be bestowed at the Judgment Seat of Christ are spoken of as “crowns.”

The Bible refers to five crowns

- I do not believe there are just five rewards – there are many.
- Most of the time when the crowns are mentioned in Scripture, they are in a passing fashion.
- They are not talked about a lot nor in any detail.

First, the Crown of Righteousness – vs. 8

A crown of righteousness for righteous living—we all know that many Christians live ungodly/unholy lives.

- Paul said, “I have kept the faith.” Faithful to the Word of God in one’s living.
- A life that has been given to the Lord in obedience to His Word

Paul anticipated his crown, for his life had been lived in submissive obedience to God’s will.

The glorious prospect of receiving God's crown of righteousness not only belongs to Paul.

Look at Vs. 8e

- Those who are living for Christ are ready for His appearing, looking forward to His appearing, love His appearing.
- But if we are living contrary to the Word of God, a life of selfishness and sin, when the Master returns—we are ashamed, and we are not ready. (It's like the employee who has not fulfilled his assignments and the boss is coming.)

There is a way to live as a Christian—holy living—and he will receive the Crown of Righteousness!

The Second Crown is the Crown of Life

This crown is mentioned twice in Scripture.

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.”*

Our faith is tested in trials.

- Do we give in to temptation?
- Do we compromise with sin?
- Are we quiet when we should speak?

The “crown of life” is a reward for faithfully enduring trials.

- We could call it the “persevering crown.”
- It is when things get tough that we discover how much we rely on God, how much we trust God, how much we believe His Word.

God has promised this to “those who love Him” (v. 12). Our love is tried in trials.

Our steadfastness reveals our love for the Lord.

- Do we disown the Lord?
- Are we ashamed of Him?

When one truly loves the Lord and trusts Him, the right attitudes and thoughts will surface during trials (vs. 2)—outlook determines outcome.

Love for God enables believers who undergo trials to rest confidently in Him.

God does not help us by removing the trial, but by making the trial work for us.

Satan wants to use the trial to tear us down, but God uses them to build us up.

The second reference to the crown of life is in . . .

Revelation 2:10, *“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.”*

This crown will be given for commitment, dedication, and faithfulness to the Lord in trials, tribulation, and temptation—even unto death

Third, the Incorruptible Crown

Mention of this crown is made in I Corinthians 9:24-27.

There were two great athletic events in Greek culture, the Olympic games, and Isthmian games. Both were held at Corinth.

Therefore, as Paul wrote I Corinthians 9:24-27, the Corinthians would be intimately familiar with the terminology used.

The contestants were put through rigorous training for ten months, the last month being spent in Corinth in daily workouts in the gymnasium and athletic fields.

The events were a major attraction, and no one would train so hard and so long without the anticipation and expectation of winning.

For that reason, the Bible says in vs. 24: *“Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? [There is only going to be one winner.] So run that ye may obtain”* (v. 24).

In the heavenly race, there is no competition.

- We are not racing against another church or other Christians.

We have been given the commandment to run, to fully exert one’s self (v. 24). In our running, God exhorts us to exercise self control, an “exercise” crucial to victory (v. 25a).

This picture was “drawn from athletes, who in preparing themselves for the games, abstained from unwholesome food, wine and sexual indulgence.”

One must limit personal liberty.

If an athlete expects to excel, he voluntarily restricts his liberty.

- His sleep, diet, and exercise are not determined by his rights, or by his feelings, but by the requirements of his training.
- An athlete will discipline himself and his lifestyle to win a race—we should discipline ourselves for Christ—church attendance, daily Bible reading, time spent in quietness and prayer, fellowship of the believers.

The Bible says at the end of vs. 25: *“Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.”*

These athletes would train long and hard, merely for the sake of a garland wreath and the brief fame/acclaim that goes with it.

In contrast, the Christian’s reward is eternal, neither corruptible nor perishable.

Vs. 26-27

A life of discipline shows.

“Castaway” means disapproved (disqualified)—put on the shelf/bench.

The incorruptible crown is thus seen to be a reward for a self-disciplined life.

This reward awaits those who by personal sacrifice, willing obedience, and repetition of mission, serve God by denying themselves, taking up their cross—of sacrifice and following Him.

Fourth, the Crown of Rejoicing

The Apostle Paul said to the Philippians: *“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved”* (Philippians 4:1).

I Thessalonians 2:19, *“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?”*

Paul referred to people as his crown of rejoicing.

- This is the reward for the soul-winner.
- Everyone should receive this reward for faithful witnessing.

Those brought to the Lord Jesus Christ by us—whether we planted, watered, or harvested—shall be our crown of rejoicing at His coming.

What a joy it will be to see a great host of souls in glory, brought to the Lord as a result of our efforts for Him!

The Rejoicing Soul-Winner’s Crown

If we have the heart and mind of Christ, if we truly are following the Lord, we will be fishers of men.

We can't save people, but we can point them in the right direction.

- Whom have we been witnessing to?
- Whom have we shared the Gospel with?
- Who have we invited and brought to church?

Truly, a crown of rejoicing!

Imagine being in Heaven—child, a neighbor, co-worker, relative

Fifth, the Crown of Glory

This is Christ's reward for the feeding of the flock

- This is the faithful pastor's crown.
- This crown deals with those spiritual leaders who have served faithfully (I Peter 5:1-4). Good shepherds of the sheep!

Five Crowns

Let me give you a couple of closing thoughts:

- We are stewards of God
- It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful—I Corinthians 4:2.

Romans 14:12, *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

It is a fact that every Christian will have to render account to God.

- Everything a Christian has in life – whether it is intellectual capacity, natural gifts, physical health, spiritual gifts, or wealth – is a gift from God.
- The more entrusted to us, the more for which we will have to give an account.

"To whom much is given, much is required."

As stewards of all that God has given to us, we will give an account at the Judgment Seat of Christ and will not be held responsible for that which was given to others, but will be held responsible only for what has been given to us.

Second, we can lose our rewards.

Colossians 2:18, *“Let no man beguile you of your reward”*

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

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

The Bible encourages us to finish and receive a full reward.

Thirdly, The idea of casting our crowns before Jesus

- John wrote in Revelation 4 of twenty-four elders are adorned with "crowns of gold" (v. 4).

Revelation 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.”*

Nowhere does the Bible say or teach we will be casting our crowns or giving our rewards back to Christ—it is a good thought!

All Christians would willingly “divest themselves of all honor” to the Lord of glory and would joyfully and willingly give back what He produced through them in the first place, proclaiming: *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, for Thy pleasure they are and were created”* (v. 11).

Present Labors, Future Rewards

Let us stand for closing invitation. Every eye closed

Some believers will have treasure, rulership, and rewards, and some will not.

Philippians 2:14-16, *“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”*

The appeal, therefore, is for each person to take heed how he builds upon Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 3

Salvation