

Anticipating Your Crowns

A friend and I were recently discussing that many believers we know seem weary of the present and uneasy about the future. Many seem to lack any form of excitement about what awaits them in the eternal kingdom that draws closer by the day. As we concluded our conversation I suggested that most of the Christians I stay in touch with seem more mature than so many I have randomly talked with in church, Christian gatherings, and that I see and hear in the media. I finished our chat suggesting that I was certain that most Christians that I thought of as friends will one day be shown their value to God's Kingdom and will be rewarded with one, or many, of the Crowns the Lord has promised his children.

In the New Testament the major Greek term for crown is "stephanos." The term is used eighteen times in the New Testament. Baker's Evangelical Dictionary defines it: **The rewards Christians will receive for faithful service to the Lord will be given out at the judgment seat of Christ or the "bema" judgment. The Greek word "bema" refers to the place where the works of believers will be evaluated by Christ for purposes of reward. In 2 Corinthians, Paul adds this consideration — For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**

At the time of the Rapture, both the living and dead in Christ will receive their glorified bodies and be taken up to Heaven. While the Tribulation rages across the Earth, the glorified believers in Heaven will face a different kind of judgment — the Judgment of the Just as some refer to it. The purpose of this judgment by Jesus is to determine the degree of rewards for how those raptured used their spiritual gifts to advance his kingdom while living on Earth. The true worth of a persons life work will reveal itself for all to see and celebrate. — Lamb & Lion Ministries

The Five Crowns

- **Imperishable Crown** — Those who resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, who run with patience the race before them.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 — 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. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection....

Self-discipline requires the ability to say "No" when necessary. Serving God involves narrowing our focus to those things with the highest eternal value. — David Jeremiah

- **Crown of Rejoicing** — For soul winners.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 — 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? For you are our glory and joy.

Proverbs 11:30 — The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.

Daniel 12:3 — Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Just imagine how you will rejoice in heaven upon seeing and talking with the people who recognize your contribution to their spiritual development. — Charles Stanley

• **Crown of Glory** — For leaders and lay-leaders who minister to others.

1 Peter 5:2-4 — Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords 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 does not fade away.

It seems likely that many who are known for their humble leadership will receive this crown for their discipleship of other believers who have seen by their life an example of love, kindness, and the righteous manifestation of Christ's life to those to whom they minister.

• **Crown of Righteousness** — For those who watch for Christ's imminent return.

2 Timothy 4:8 — Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only but also to all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

Many Christians become so caught up with earthly activities that they forget heaven is their true home. This crown is for those who long for heaven, their true home. — David Jeremiah

• **Crown of Life** — For those who endure temptation, testing, and trials.

James 1:12 — Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Revelation 2:10 — Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Heartache and pain are unavoidable in this life, but we can take heart because much spiritual growth happens in adversity. — Charles Stanley

Living With Anticipation

Revelation 3:11 — Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Revelation 22:12 — “Behold, I (Jesus) am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to each one according to the merit of his deeds (earthly works, faithfulness). AMP

The following were a part of my notes for this Musing, but I failed to note the source:

#1 - Dr. J. I. Packer quoted a psychologist on the marks of maturity:

The first mark is the ability to deal constructively with reality, to face facts, to not cover up reality or call it something else, but to deal with it as it is. Mature people do not kid themselves.

The second mark is adapting quickly to change. Immature people resist change. The mark of maturity is to adapt to change because change is inevitable.

The third mark is freedom from the symptoms of tension and anxiety. Maturing means you have begun to see that God is in control of this world. Maturity means you are learning to trust.

The fourth mark is to be satisfied more with giving than receiving. That is a sign you are growing up. You are discovering the true values of life.

The fifth mark is to relate to others with consistency, helpfulness and mutual satisfaction — learning to get along with other people, to contribute to the solution and not to be always a part of the problem. — Unknown

*#2 - We're all wondering how long this season of limitation and social distancing will last. We're unsure how much of life that we've previously known and enjoyed will eventually be experienced again. In this context, I find Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of God's words (through Jeremiah) to the exiles instructive for us today: **"Quit sitting around feeling sorry for yourselves. The aim of the person of faith is not to be as comfortable as possible but to live as deeply and thoroughly as possible – to deal with the reality of life, discover truth, create beauty, act out love."** — Unknown*

There are no crown-wearers in heaven that were not cross-bearers here below — Charles Spurgeon

In the name of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we press on with grateful hearts for the crowns that await us in the presence of our gracious Father. — Amen!