The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement, I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, 'O God, forgive me,' or 'Help me.'

Billy Graham

Prayer Study #435

CROWNS

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For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works.

Matthew 16:27

The first mention of crowns in the New Testament ironically refers to the Thorn of Crowns and is found in Matthew 27:29: *And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"* The irony is that crowns are supposed to be rewards given to denote royalty or to praise exemplary work. Believers will receive these latter kinds of crowns for the works they do as believers.

Let us quickly say, however, that salvation, i.e. deliverance, healing, the born again experience, and all the promises of God, *Yes and Amen!,* is not based on works. Salvation is based exclusively on faith in Jesus as the Savior and Son of God: *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him* (John 3:36). Ephesians also address this theme: *For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God-not of works, lest any man should boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Nevertheless, we know by James 2:17 (*Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone)*, that our works are important. The Holy Spirit expounds on this in 1st Corinthians 3:8-15: *Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's cultivated field, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid a foundation, and another buildeth on it. But let every man*

take heed how he buildeth upon it. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble- every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall test every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built upon it, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire.

These verses from 1st Corinthians tell us the following:

a. Every believer is rewarded according to his works.
b. We are laborers together with God.
c. We build on the foundation of Jesus Christ.
d. We can labor with eternal materials (gold, silver, precious stones- faith, redemption, and the glory of God) or with temporal stones (wood, hay, stubble-things that won't last).

Those who build on Christ with temporal materials (things like reputation, a big ministry kingdom, money, etc.) will find their works destroyed at the judgment seat of Christ. These believers will suffer loss of eternal rewards and will be ashamed (1st John 2:28: *And now, little children, abide in Him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming*), but will be saved. Those who build on eternal materials will receive crowns.

THE CROWN OF LIFE
1ST 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.

This crown is sometimes called the Lover's Crown. This goes to believers who glory in tribulation and find strength to overcome temptation and to endure trials because of their sense of the love of God. Paul wrote in Romans 5:3-5: *...but we glory in tribulations also,*

knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us. All believers will have eternal life, but all believers will not have the Crown of Life. This is given only to those who are "faithful unto death." Revelation 2:10: ***…Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.*** This crown will be given to those who are "faithful unto death" and who love the Lord more than their own lives (Mark 8:35). They will live for Christ and endure temptations, in the power of the love of God.

THE CROWN INCORRUPTIBLE
1ST Corinthians 9:25

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

No one could enter the Greek games unless he was Greek. In the same way no unsaved person can participate in the work of the Lord for rewards unless he is a genuine Christian. To enter the spiritual race to win the "incorruptible crown," believers must adhere to the rules of the Word:

a. The believer must deny self of anything that would hold him back or weigh him down (Hebrews 12:1).
b. The believer must keep his eyes focused on Jesus and not look to the left or right (Hebrews 12:2).
c. The believer must find his strength in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10-18).
d. The believer must place his all upon the altar of the Lord (Romans 12:2).
e. The believer must, by faith, refuse anything that would slow or stop his progress (Hebrews 11:24-29).

Paul exhorts us to enter the race and run to win!

THE CROWN OF REJOICING
1ST 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.

This wonderful crown is given to those who bring others to Christ. Bringing others to a saving knowledge of Christ is the greatest work we are called to do on the earth. Here are some scriptures that deal with soul winners:

a. It is wise to win souls to Christ (Proverbs 11:30).
b. It is a work against sin to win souls to Christ (James 5:20).
c. It is a cause of joy in heaven to win souls to Christ (Luke 15:10).
d. Every soul winner will shine as the stars forever (Daniel 12:3).

But how do we do it?

a. Witness with your life so that others may see Christ in you (2nd Corinthians 3:2 & Galatians 2:20).
b. Witness with your mouth, knowing that the Holy Spirit will empower your words with His anointing (Acts 1:8).
c. Witness with tithes and offerings that others may preach Christ and go places where you might not can go. You will have "fruit" that will put in your heavenly account! (Philippians 3:19 & 1st Corinthians 15:58)

All of heaven will rejoice when the recipients of this crown are crowned (John 4:36).

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
2nd Timothy 4:5-8

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. 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 have loved His appearing.

Every one of you who are believers have been given the righteousness of God or, to put it another way, have been made the righteousness of God in HIM. This saving righteousness is a gift and is spoken of in 2nd Corinthians 5:21: *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* This righteousness of God is not what is being spoken of here. The Crown of Righteousness is a reward that is given to those who long for and love the Biblical doctrines concerning the Second Coming of Christ. Paul was such a man. The dynamic truth of the reality of the Second Coming so impacted Paul's whole ministry that he could say truthfully that he had fought the good fight (1st Corinthians 15:32); he had finished his course with his eyes fixed on Christ (Philippians 1:6); and he had kept the faith.

THE CROWN OF GLORY
1st Peter 5:1-4

The elders who are among you I exhort. I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 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.

The Crown of Glory is given to the faithful, God-called pastor (male or female). A pastor is rewarded this when he does the following:

a. Feeds the church body with the Word of God and when necessary, "*reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine"* the body and individual members whom the Lord has entrusted to him or her (2nd Timothy 4:2-5).

b. Takes spiritual oversight of the church, being responsible for the message anyone preaches to his people and preaches to please God and not men (Galatians 1:10).
c. Is an example with his life to the church. He is not in it for the money, but it is an obligation of the church to provide for his material needs (1st Timothy 5:18 & Malachi 3:10). He is to be a leader and not a dictator but is the authority in the house.