

“THE LIFE GOD REWARDS”

Big Idea . . . Part 5: THE CROWNS

1 Cor. 3:10-15; 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Rom. 14:10-12

INTRO: There are two key principles to understand in living a life God rewards. Both impact our forever life. First, who or what we *believe* decides our eternal destination (where spend eternity). Second, how we *behave* after receiving Christ decides our eternal compensation. Last time we examined the BEMA (2 Cor. 5:9-10), where every follower of Christ after-salvation behaviors are examined, judged, and rewarded-reminding us of the unbreakable link between how we live today and how (not if) we will experience heaven after death. All believers experience heaven, but not all enjoy the same experience in heaven (Matt. 25:19-21).

GOD IS REDEEMER & REWARDER – Lk. 14:12-14; Jn. 5:28-29; Matt. 6:6; Heb. 11:6. Two lessons ago (Good News about Rewards - on YT) we examined a list (not exhaustive) of what God will reward us for: seeking Him, submitting to authority, self-denial, serving others (esp. those who can't repay), suffering, sacrifices, sharing, etc. The list leaves us both humbled and excited. But How does He actually reward (bless) us? One way is with CROWNS (stephanos - our Stephanie). Crown is *stephanos* – a transitory laurel wreath. Scripture mentions five different crowns – again probably not exhaustive. In addition to all receiving eternal assignments (Matt. 25:21; Rev. 20:6) and praise (1 Cor. 4:5), there are crowns to be distributed to some (but not all). Each crown rewards a certain behavior.

- Crown of *VICTORY* (incorruptible) for self-controlled disciplined bring (1 Cor. 9:25-27; Matt. 16:24-27) – Chose to say “No” not just to the sinful but to less. Focused on all Christ had to offer. Takes great discipline to say “NO”. Self-denial is hard. For all who run the Christian race well. This crown could be the key to the others.
- Crown of *REJOICING* for faithful witnessing (1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1; Psa. 126:5-6) – to those who “help” in the *process* of seeing someone come to Christ (1 Cor. 3:6-9); able to give an account of the hope (Christ) within them (1 Pet. 3:15)
- Crown of *RIGHTEOUSNESS* for loving Christ's appearing (2 Tim. 4:8) – Too many followers are so caught up in temporal activities, they forget where their true home is. This crown goes to believers who longed for heaven. 2 Tim. 4:7 is their mantra. Col. 3:2 think about heaven.

- Crown of *LIFE* for enduring trials, esp. for your commitment to Christ (Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10) – These hold on to their love for Jesus in spite of the difficulties and circumstances. They kept the faith when it was costly (missionaries, Christians in business). They didn't get angry or give up when life was difficult and unfair.
- Crown of *GLORY* for the caring and feeding of the flock (1 Pet. 5:4) – Limited to pastors? Probably not. Goes to those who faithfully served God's people – leaders?

“Does one or more of these have your name on it?”

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THESE CROWNS REWARDED TO US?” (Rev. 4:9-11) – Keep pressing on for the prize (Phil. 3:13-14)

REMEMBER - All receive commendation and praise (1 Cor. 4:5). All receive eternal assignments of service (Rev. 20:6). Only some receive crowns as rewards (up close to throne? Others in the arena but distant? - Distant or courtside?)

Some will “Suffer Loss” (1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Jn. 8; Rev. 3:11). Loss of reward not salvation. All based on the unbreakable link that how we live and behave today is directly impacting everything that will happen in eternity. He comes with crowns. Remember the dot and line visual? Show it PPT. What happens inside the dot determines everything that happens on the line!

CONC: Again, I ask, “Will one or more of these crown rewards have your name on it?” Your Redeemer and Rewarder God wants you to have rewards (crowns). Still time to earn. But be careful not to lose any! Carpe Diem (Seize the day!).