

THE CROWN OF LIFE

(James 1:12)

I. The description of the crown (1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Peter 5:4).

- a. As we begin, we do need to note that when this physical body is left at death or the Lord's return, we will receive new spiritual bodies.
 - i. So, this crown of life is not physical either.
 - ii. It is a symbol of reward for the saint.
- b. But we are given a description of the glory of this crown in these two verses.
- c. We aren't told how many points on the crown, or the weight or things of a physical nature at all, so we can't give a picture of the crown.
- d. What is given is a description of how long this crown will remain.
- e. Paul was inspired to use a descriptive word that means "not liable to corruption or decay" (1 Corinthians 9:25).
- f. Peter was inspired to use a word that is only found in this verse (1 Peter 5:4) and nowhere else in the New Testament.
 - i. It literally means "composed of amaranth".
 - ii. The amaranth is a flower that was very important in Greek mythology.
 - iii. The word amaranth means "one that does not wither" and the flower itself was known as the never fading flower.
 - iv. The flower itself is one that does not wither quickly so it became a symbol of immortality in Ancient Greece.
- g. The New Testament gives us the description of the crown as something that will never lose its luster and will never fade.
 - i. Peter was inspired to write that we are looking for an inheritance that will never fade away, eternal in the heavens (1 Peter 1:4).
 - ii. The word there is a close relative of what is found in 1 Peter 5:4.
 - iii. It means perennial, like a perennial flower, one that lasts for a long time.
- h. Also, the word for crown itself is important.
 - i. The word used throughout all of these verses is not the word for that worn by royalty.
 - ii. Rather, it is the word used for crown given to one victorious in the games mentioned earlier.
 - iii. Strong's says: "the wreath or garland which was given as a prize to victors in public games".
- i. The crown given us will last as long as the inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven and symbolizes the victory over sin and Satan.

II. The determination of those receiving the crown.

- a. Not just anyone will receive this never-fading crown.
- b. James tells us that it will go to those who endure temptation (James 1:12).

- i. Inspiration began this letter by telling us that trials, or temptations, if endured are a blessing.
 - ii. The reason is that it causes the one who endures to become stronger.
 - iii. Then, the Holy Spirit reveals to us that not only strength is gained, but a crown as well.
- c. Paul was inspired to call it a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8).
 - i. This indicates the one wearing it as righteous.
 - ii. We know that one is declared righteous, or justified, who has come into contact with the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9).
 - iii. So, the wearer must be one who has come into contact with the blood of Christ, which is only done in baptism (Romans 6:3-4).
 - iv. We see that one must be baptized into Christ in order to gain this crown.
- d. Jesus told the church at Smyrna that if they would be faithful to Him, even at the cost of their lives, they would be given a crown (Revelation 2:10).
 - i. This congregation was under fire from Rome as well as the unbelieving Jews.
 - ii. Their lives were in jeopardy for being Christians.
 - iii. Jesus promised them that if they remained faithful, even if that meant losing their physical lives, they would receive the crown.
- e. Both Paul and James tells us the one who loves God and His Son's appearing will be given the crown.
 - i. Jesus said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15).
 - ii. Those that love the appearing of Jesus will be those who are faithful.
 - iii. When the Lord returns, it will be terrible for those who are not faithful, so they will not love His appearing.
- f. When you put these verses together, and what they tell us about the ones who will receive this crown, you see God has made the determination that those who have obeyed the gospel and remained faithful til death will wear the crown.

III. The duration of wearing the crown.

- a. We mentioned the Olympic games were every four years and the Isthmian games were every two years.
 - i. Those who were victorious had the right to wear the crown for their event until the next games took place.
 - ii. In two or four years, they relinquished their crown unless they repeated as champions.
- b. The crown of life will never be relinquished once received.
- c. James and Jesus both call it a crown of life.
 - i. This indicates eternal life.
 - ii. It is a never-fading crown worn in a place that never fades away.

- d. We will never have to give up wearing the victors crown because we will be victorious for all eternity.

IV. There is possible devastation.

- a. The crown is wonderful, eternal, and for the one who obeys the gospel.
- b. It is a promise from God and God does not and cannot lie.
- c. However, there is possible devastation (Revelation 3:11).
 - i. This was said by Jesus to the church at Philadelphia.
 - ii. There are no condemnatory notes in this letter or the letter to the church at Smyrna.
 - iii. These brethren were faithful and had shown themselves to be such.
- d. This congregation, facing extreme pressure and even persecution, was warned not allow some man to take their crown.
 - i. No one can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).
 - ii. No one can remove us from the hand of God (John 10:29).
- e. How then, could someone take their crown?
 - i. Notice the phrase before the warning: hold that fast which thou hast.
 - ii. If they failed to hold fast to their faith because of pressure or giving in to some false doctrine, they would be allowing a man to take their crown.
- f. This shows us the very real possibility of apostasy.
 - i. Here was a very faithful group of Christians who has shown their faith, not just verbally expressed it.
 - ii. They were warned that they could still lose that crown.
- g. How devastating it would be to have known that the crown was yours, that you were going to be victorious, only to allow someone to convince you that winning that crown was not going to be worth whatever needed to be done to keep it.