

## **HOLD FAST – LET NO ONE TAKE THY CROWN**

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

**CROWN** – the Greek word for the victor’s crown is “stephanos”

- A.** It is the biblical term for a **REWARD**; a badge of royalty; a prize; a symbol of honor
- B.** In biblical days it was used to honor someone publicly who had distinguished themselves for their service; it was worn at the “parousia” (advent or return) of kings.
- C.** Laurel and ivy crowns were given by officials at the Bema seat of the Olympics in Corinth in biblical days. Athletes trained continually, practiced self discipline and denied themselves of worldly pursuits, so that they could win the “crown of the victor”.
  - 1.** The Judgment Seat of Christ includes a **CROWNING DAY** for Christians who will receive rewards, for those who were obedient and faithful to their calling; 2 Cor. 5:10
    - a.** It is also called the Bema Seat of Christ; it does not determine salvation. This was already determined by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the Cross; Romans 8:1; 1 John 2:2
  - 2.** Some will receive **ETERNAL CROWNS** from the Lord Jesus Christ for their faithful service to Him. Some will have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom; 2 Peter 1:10-11.
    - a.** The works that survive the fire are the deeds for which believers are rewarded; whatever is determined to be worthless by the Lord Jesus Christ is burned up in the fire: “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 try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss”; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15
      - b.** Roles, assignments, divine privileges and celestial glory will vary among believers.
  - 3.** The Gift of Eternal Life is not the same as a **CROWN**, which is **EARNED**
    - a.** There is a gift to be received; Rom. 5:15-18, and a prize to be won; 1 Cor. 9:24-27
    - b.** There is an inheritance of sonship “by birth”. The prodigal son did not lose his “sonship”, but he lost his inheritance; Luke 15:11-32
    - c.** There is also an inheritance which is conditional, an “earned” reward, based upon obedience, personal sacrifice and suffering for the sake of the Kingdom; Philippians 3:14
  - 4.** Scripture tells us that crowns can be **GAINED** and crowns can be **LOST**; Rev. 3:11
    - a.** God gives us talents and gifts to accomplish a God-given task. He has given us grace, and a period of time for the purpose of fulfilling an assignment; 1 Peter 4:10
    - b.** Some will forfeit a reward, what the Lord intended for them, and someone else can take it. If we are unfaithful, but another is faithful (by excelling and overcoming), they can gain (inherit) our “crown” because they have qualified; Revelation 21:7
  - 5.** There are **IMPORTANT FACTORS** for us to consider regarding eternal rewards:
    - a.** Our conduct, our attitude and our behavior; faithfulness and devotion to the Lord.
    - b.** We will give account for the words we have spoken; Matt. 12:36-37; Psalm 139:4
    - c.** Neglected opportunities, wasted talents, careless living, compromise, procrastination, broken promises can determine whether or not we receive or lose rewards.
    - d.** The motives for our works: if we do our works to be seen by men, there is no eternal reward. If we do our works (giving, praying, etc) in secret before God, we will be rewarded by God Himself; Matthew 6:1-6
    - e.** Those who gain eternal rewards will be made “rulers over cities”; Luke 19:17; “rulers over many things”; Matthew 25:21; “rulers over all His goods”; Matthew 24:47

Different KINDS OF CROWNS are mentioned in Scripture:

**1. The Incorruptible Crown**

a. This crown indicates conquering the sin nature: for the one who practices self control, puts off fleshly desires and turns from the things of the world; 1 Corinthians 9:25

b. It is for the Christian who “runs the race” according to the rules; he will get the prize.

c. He is not a spectator, but a participant, who is focused upon his spiritual progress.

**2. The Crown Of Righteousness**

a. This crown is earned by one who has fought a “good fight”, who lives righteously in this world (who demonstrates righteous behavior, an upright life); Titus 2:12-13

b. It is earned by one who looks for and “loves His appearing”; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

c. It is for those who “finish their course”, produce much fruit and keep the faith.

**3. The Crown Of Life**

a. This crown is given to the one who is obedient to God’s call and assignment for their life, who is faithful and perseveres through trials and temptation; Revelation 2:10

b. This crown is for those who become martyrs, or suffer for His sake; James 1:12

c. This is for those who have lost their lives and are faithful unto death.; Mark 8:34-35

**4. The Crown Of Rejoicing (Joy)**

a. It is earned by the Christian who is a soul winner; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

b. It is a reward for those who have influenced others to live for Christ; Philippians 4:1

c. Those who lead others to faith in Christ will shine like stars forever; Daniel 12:3

**5. The Crown Of Glory**

a. It is earned by “shepherds”: those who tend, lead and feed God’s flock, by caring for them and building up the Body of Christ; 1 Peter 5:4

b. It is for the “faithful and wise” leader who fulfills their calling and finishes the work God gave them to do; those who “receive him” shall partake of his reward; Matt. 10:41.

c. This is for one who preaches faithfully; doesn’t serve for financial gain; 2 Tim. 4:2-5

We Are Told To “Hold Fast” (Hold On Firmly) To:

1. That which is good; 1 Thessalonians 5:21

2. Sound words; 2 Timothy 1:13

3. Our confidence and hope in Christ; Hebrews 3:6

4. The trustworthy Word of God; Titus 1:9

5. Our profession of faith; Hebrews 4:14

6. What we have (spiritual riches and God’s promises); Revelation 2:25; 3:11

Scripture Gives Examples Of Those Who Suffered Loss Of Rewards Or Turned Back From Fully Following The Lord:

1. Esau sold his birthright for “a mess of pottage”; Gen. 25:29-34; Hebrews 12:16-17

2. The spirit was poured out upon king Saul initially; he began in the spirit, but was disobedient and ended in the flesh; 1 Samuel 10:1-7; 18:12; 28:7-25

3. Jonathan made a covenant with David, but he remained loyal to “Saul’s house”. He forfeited his position in David’s kingdom and was killed by the Philistines; 1 Sam. 31:2

4. The faith of Hymenus and Alexander was made “shipwrecked”; 1 Timothy 1:19-20

5. Demas forsook Paul and his ministry, having “loved this present world”; 2 Tim. 4:10

