

Your Eternal Life Starts Now!

Building for Your Future Today

Biblical Significance of Crowns

Crown Incorruptible (1 Corinthians 9:25)

Crown of Life (James 1:12)

What Will Make It Into Eternity (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

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The Things That Last

Today we'll be taking a closer look at our eternal rewards— the ones associated with our eternal life.

Specifically, we will be studying two of the crowns mentioned in the New Testament: the crown incorruptible and the crown of life.

As the subject opens up to us, we will see how godly actions we take today feed into and make possible rewards we can enjoy in the future — what I like to call, “the things that last.”

When my mother died, I had no regrets. Though I had a profound sense of loss losing a parent who was also a lifelong friend, my heart was nevertheless at rest knowing the love I had shared with her throughout her lifetime. (I may not have done it perfectly, but by the grace of God, I believe I did it faithfully.)

Where does love go when we die? Today as I'm speaking to you, my love for my deceased parents lives on in my heart; but one day, I too will rest in peace if Christ doesn't return first. Then what happens to the love we shared?

God in His infinite love, mercy and grace has provided a way to capture all good things for eternity. He exhorts us to pursue these things in this life.

1 Timothy 6:11b:

... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience [patient endurance], meekness.

We will see that all these wonderful virtues that we have experienced as we have lived for God during our earthly lives — righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness — will make it through to eternity. None of the good

and godly things in our lives today will be lost in the future. That is the justice of our just God.

Everlasting Life: A Prelude to Eternity

When we got born again, we received eternal life. King James sometimes translates this by the term “everlasting life.”

John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The expression “everlasting life” captures the idea that our future life all begins at a point in time — the moment when we are born again. From that instant on, all our life becomes a [prelude to eternity](#). We now have an opportunity to do things that please God, not only today, but for all time. These are the things that constitute our eternal rewards, one category of which is [crowns](#). What we do today, matters tomorrow.

Laying Hold on Eternal Life

Understanding these things about everlasting life, what does the Scripture mean when it exhorts us to “[lay hold on eternal life](#)”?

1 Timothy 6:12, 19:

Fight the good fight of faith, [lay hold on eternal life](#), whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may [lay hold on eternal life](#).

How can we lay hold on something we haven’t yet received in all its fullness? Quite simply, because the things we do on earth now can be among the “things that last” in heaven in the future. And God will see to it that not one good thing is forgotten!

Biblical Significance of Crowns

Life and Fruitfulness (Origin)

Let's get started on crowns. What later came to be known as crowns started out as mere wreaths. The wreaths were made of freshly-cut twigs that had been bent so as to make a circle that you could sit on top of your head. Adorned with living leaves, these crowns were thus regarded as a symbol of life, fertility and fruitfulness. Sporting such a crown was looked on as evidence of God's blessing on the wearer. So, from the very beginning, crowns were associated with *life*.

Although sometimes used in the context of royalty, the word "crown" in the Bible is most prominently used figuratively. Here are some of the better-known examples.

Protection and Care (Psalms)

Lovingkindness and tender mercies

Psalm 103:4:

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

Honor and Authority (Proverbs)

Godly wife

Proverbs 12:4:

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband:...

Gray hair

Proverbs 16:31:

The hoary [gray] head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Grandchildren

Proverbs 17:6:

Children's children are the crown of old men;

Wisdom

Proverbs 4:9:

She [Wisdom] shall give to thine head an ornament of grace:
a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Treasured Relationship (Isaiah)

Lord as crown of His people

Isaiah 28:5:

In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory,
and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

Israel as God's crown (in His hand)

Isaiah 62:3:

Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

Glory and Joy (1 Thessalonians)

Hope and rejoicing

1 Thessalonians 2:19,20:

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

For ye are our glory and joy.

Victory and Life (1 Corinthians, James)

1 Corinthians 9:24,25:

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain [Greek καταλαμβάνω *katalambanō*, lay hold of something so as to make it one's own].

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate [master of himself] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an [incorruptible](#).

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.

Crown Incorruptible (1 Corinthians 9:25)

Given for self-control in competition

The crown incorruptible is given for exercising self-control as we press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call.

1 Corinthians 9:25:

And every man that striveth for the mastery is [temperate \[master of himself\]](#) in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

In contrast to the perishable nature of our earthly bodies, the crown incorruptible (or [imperishable wreath](#)) will never wither.

To receive it, we subject our earthly bodies to the dominion of our will, exercising mastery of body, soul and spirit.

Supreme attainment — reward of victory

Pressing toward the goal for the prize

The crown incorruptible is set in the context of the athletic games. The victor's wreath was the symbol of their conquest.

1 Corinthians 9:26,27 [Weymouth NT]:

That is how I run, not being in any doubt as to my goal. I am a boxer who does not inflict blows on the air,

but I hit hard and straight at my own body and lead it off into slavery, lest possibly, after I have been a herald to others, I should myself be rejected.

Philippians 3:12-14 [ESV]:

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to **make it my own** [*katalambanō*], because Christ Jesus has **made me his own** [*katalambanō*].

Brothers, I do not consider that I have **made it my own** [*katalambanō*]. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Prerequisite: compete according to the rules

2 Timothy 2:5:

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

2 Timothy 2:5 [ESV]:

An athlete is not crowned unless he **competes according to the rules**.

Requirement: self-control in all things

Mastery of the entire self: body, soul & spirit

1 Corinthians 9:25:

And every man that striveth for the mastery is **temperate** [**master of himself**] in all things.

Jesus Christ's example of self-control (Matthew 4)

Jesus Christ was a master of self-control, the perfect example of dominion from within of the self (body, soul and spirit).

We see this most vividly showcased in his response to the devil's temptations after he first received the spirit of God.

Mastery of the Body: Hunger

Jesus Christ showed his mastery of the body in his self-control when faced with hunger after fasting forty days and forty nights.

Mastery of the Soul (Mind): Pride

Jesus Christ showed his mastery of the soul (or mind) in his self-control when faced with the temptation to be prideful about his heavenly status as the Son of God.

Mastery of the Spirit: Worship

Jesus Christ showed his mastery of the spirit in his self-control when faced with the temptation to worship the adversary after being offered all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Our ability to exhibit the same

By fruit of the spirit

We can exhibit self-control because it's a fruit of the spirit.

Galatians 5:22,23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, **temperance [self-control]**: against such there is no law.

By means of our character wellspring (Christ)

We can also exhibit **self-control** because it's one of the godly virtues that comes with the faith of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-7:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

And to knowledge **temperance [self-control]**; and to **temperance [self-control]** patience; and to patience godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

These seven character traits of Christ, built upon our faith, are "things that last": virtue [moral excellence], knowledge [of God], temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.

2 Peter 1:8-11:

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Putting on the mind of Christ in these categories will pave the way for us to enjoy a grand and glorious experience of life when Christ returns.

Having seen the joys of the crown incorruptible, let's move on to the crown of life.

Crown of Life (James 1:12)

Given for loving the Lord

The crown of life is given for loving the Lord, patiently enduring temptation under trial.

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.

In the expression "crown of life," "life" is added as an explanatory equivalent of "crown." The literal meaning therefore is "**the crown which is life.**"

In contrast to the mortal nature of our earthly bodies, the crown of life will endure through all eternity.

To receive it, we endure with the patience of hope, meeting the test of our faith.

No deadly threat can ever snatch away the one who has been crowned by God with life.

Requirement: patient endurance under trial

As we read in James 1:12, the crown of life is for the one who, because of his love for God, has endured temptation when tried.

James 1:2-4:

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Knowing this, that **the trying of your faith** worketh **patience [patient endurance]**.

But let **patience [patient endurance]** have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Jesus Christ's example of patient endurance (Hebrews 12)

Jesus Christ was the greatest example who ever lived in terms of patient endurance.

He persevered to the end while keeping his eye on the goal, and thus became the “founder and perfecter of our faith”, as it says in the ESV.

Hebrews 12:1-3:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with **patience [patient endurance]** the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him that **endured** such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Our ability to exhibit the same

By means of our character wellspring (Christ)

We can exhibit **endurance** because it's one of the godly virtues that comes with the faith of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-6:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

And to knowledge temperance [self-control]; and to temperance [self-control] **patience [patient endurance]**; and to **patience [patient endurance]** godliness;

What Will Make It Into Eternity (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

We have spent quite a bit of time considering the things that last and the way to make them a part of our earthly lives. God in His mercy and grace would have us to enjoy each and every one of them.

When Christ returns, we will not be judged for our sins because God has already wiped them out at the time of our new birth when we were justified.

All that remains to do is for us to be judged at the rewards stand for the good and godly things we have done.

Build on the right foundation with the best materials

To prepare for that day, we need to build on the right foundation with the best materials.

1 Corinthians 3:10,11:

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is our one and only foundation. It's up to us what we build upon that rock.

1 Corinthians 3:12,13:

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 try every man's work of what sort it is.

Trial by fire of your faith

How will our work be made manifest? Through trial by fire.

1 Peter 1:7:

That the **trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried with fire**, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

It seems astonishing that after passing through a fiery test, our faith should nevertheless emerge intact at the appearing of Jesus Christ — and what's more, be found unto praise and honor and glory. How can this be?

What remains is your reward

The answer lies in our choice of building materials. Perishable materials will be burned up, whereas durable materials will pass the test.

1 Corinthians 3:14,15:

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: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

After the trial by fire of the future, what remains of what you've built will be your reward. If nothing remains, you won't lose your salvation. This is clearly stated in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 5:9,10 [Weymouth NT]:

And for this reason also we make it our ambition, whether at home or in exile, to please Him perfectly.

For we must all of us appear before Christ's judgement-seat in our true characters, in order that each may then receive an award for his actions in this life, in accordance with what he has done, whether it be good or whether it be worthless.

Worthless actions in this life are those that don't qualify for eternity; good actions are those that do. The choice is up to us how we want to live: for God, or preoccupied with and distracted by the things of this world.

Whether or not a born-again believer receives eternal rewards, he will still enjoy full standing as a joint-heir with Christ throughout eternity because his salvation is unshakable, having been founded on Christ the solid rock.

In the words of the hymn:

On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand.

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. What are you building?

Your eternal life starts now!