

Enduring Tests that Lead to Receiving Crowns (Jas 1:2-12)

I. ALL BELIEVERS WILL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

A. The Greek word for the “judgment seat” of Christ is “bema seat” or place for reward.

¹⁰ ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)***

⁵ ***The Lord comes who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. (1 Cor. 4:5)***

B. God esteems and rewards our works. All our obedience is forever remembered by God, therefore, our lives have great dignity even in the midst of the mundane and routine of life. He dignifies every righteous act in our life. What we do has significance forever.

C. In our resurrected body we will all have different spiritual capacities and abilities (1 Cor. 15:41-42). The crown of life refers to our capacities to experience and impart God’s life (zoe), glory or the anointing of the Spirit. The authority to impart God’s life or anointing in our ministry to others in the age-to-come is central to understanding the crown of life. There will be great joy in having the grace to participate in ministry assignments that are especially near and dear to Jesus.

⁴¹ ***There is one glory of the sun...another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)***

D. God will only give the crown of life to believers who are approved as worthy of it. This crown is not related to salvation but to our place of function in His Kingdom (government/infrastructure).

¹² ***Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved (found consistent), he will receive the crown of life...promised to those who love Him. (Jas 1:12)***

E. There are nine NT references to the crown that a believer may receive from the Lord. Twice the crown is referred to with the descriptive title the “crown of life” (Jas 1:12, Rev 2:10); once the “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8); once the “crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:4). The different titles probably refer to different nuances of the same reward (1 Cor. 9:5, Rev 3:11, 4:8).

F. There are two Greek words describing two different types of crowns in the New Testament. One is the crown of a ruler (Gr. diadem), the other is the crown of a victor (Gr., stephanos) who won a race in the Greek athletic games. The Greek word “stephanos” is used in Jas 1:12. Crowns of authority are only given to those who endure in resisting temptation until the end.

¹⁰ ***Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)***

²⁶ ***And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. (Rev 2:26)***

¹¹ ***Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (Rev. 3:11)***

- G. We are made complete by bringing all the major issues in our life (not sinless perfection) into obedience until the end of our life.
- ² *Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance). 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (Jas 1:2-4)*
- ⁹ *This also we pray, that you may be made complete. (2 Cor. 13:9)*
- ⁴⁸ *Therefore you shall be perfect (mature), just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)*
- H. Paul desired to receive the prize of the upward call (crown of righteousness/crown of life). Paul pressed toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ (v. 14). The “upward” call is the “highest” and most “heavenly” dimension of his calling in the age-to-come. Our prize is to walk in the fullest dimension that God has ordained for our calling (in the age-to-come).
- ¹⁰ *That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:10-14)*
- I. Paul presented the Christian life as a champion marathon runner who needs endurance in their preparation with discipline and restraint. We must run in the only way in which we can obtain the prize (v. 24). The issue is in running the “right way” not in “outdoing others.” A champion must continually keep his end goal in view. Paul kept his long term goal in mind (v. 26).
- ²⁴ *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize (stephanos crown)? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown (stephanos crown), but we for an imperishable crown (heavenly stephanos crown). 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty (lack of vision or focus). Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)*
- J. Paul knew that one could be disqualified from the prize before the end of the race (1 Cor. 9:27).
- ¹ *...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus... (Heb. 12:1-2)*
- K. Paul had not attained the prize because he had not yet finished his race. He wrote from a prison in Rome (shortly before he was to die) that he knew that he had won the prize (crown).
- ⁶ *I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 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... (2 Tim. 4:6-8)*

- L. Paul prayed that that saints would walk worthy so as to fulfill their highest calling.
¹¹ We also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power... (2 Thes. 1:11)
- M. We must see the relationship of gaining endurance (v. 3) to receiving the crown of life (v. 12).
² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance). ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing (in obedience in preparation for the Judgment Seat of Christ). ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom (God's perspective in a trial), let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally...⁹ Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation (to be seen at the Judgment Seat of Christ), ¹⁰ but the rich in his humiliation (seasons of testing that humble him)...¹² Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved (found consistent), he will receive the crown of life...promised to those who love Him. (Jas 1:2-12)
- N. Denying our lustful desires is the theatre God chose for us to express our love to Him. Each of us has a different struggle according to our personality and circumstances. Thus, we each have a different “assignment” from which we offer our gift of love to God. Our flesh longs for the wrong things but our spirit has a superior longing to love God. Saying, “no” gives us an opportunity to express our love. He takes it personally as we resist sin because of love.
²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me... (Jn. 14:21)

II. FAITH INVOLVES RECEIVING TESTIMONY THAT WE ARE PLEASING TO GOD

⁵ By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death...for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God...²⁴ By faith Moses...²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward...³² For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon...³⁵ and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance (by compromising), that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment...³⁹ All these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise (New Jerusalem)... (Heb. 11:5-39)

- A. David received a testimony about his life before God in the age-to-come.
⁴ The LORD God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever... (1 Chr. 28:4)
- B. The apostles received a testimony about their life before God in the age-to-come.
²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the Throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Mt. 19:28)
- C. Jesus told people to take up their cross with a view to receiving eternal rewards.
²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me...²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father...and then He will reward each according to his works. (Mt. 16:24-27)

III. WALKING IN OUR FULL POTENTIAL IN THE AGE-TO-COME

² *We...rejoice in hope (confidence) of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance (endurance); 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope (confidence to experience eternal glory) does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Spirit... (Rom. 5:2-5)*

- A. Paul wrote about walking in our full potential in God in the age-to-come. We rejoice in trials only by knowing that our struggle produces endurance which then produces proven character in us. These are essential for all who want to walk in the prize of the upward calling of their full potential in the age-to-come. Endurance refers to spiritual fortitude that stays steady under pressure and is made even stronger by, more pressure. Rejoicing in trials is more than a determination to think positively about a negative situation or to try to make the best out of it.
- B. Proven character or genuine faith (1 Pet. 1:7) means the quality of "having been proved or openly manifest." There is a dynamic relationship between having proven character and seeing the future with confidence (hope). Proven character strengthens our hope by allowing us to see the future more clearly (as the fog clears). Only the pure in heart can see clearly (Mt. 5:6).
- C. Hope is not static but is like a muscle that grows weaker without use or stronger with use. Difficulty makes us review often why it is we need to endure instead of quit by giving up and giving in. As we regularly review our life we see more clearly.
- D. Hope or confidence in our future calling in God does not disappoint us (Rom. 5:5); that is, it will not allow us to be put to shame at the time of God's judgment. Wholehearted believers need not fear such shame because the Spirit pours love into our heart from God and for God. Trials do not weaken hope, but they change us so that we increase in our ability to see and agree with God.

²⁸ *Abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. (1 Jn. 2:28)*

¹⁷ *Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love. (1 Jn. 4:17-18)*

- E. We must see the relationship of being changed by our hardships to receiving eternal rewards.

¹⁶ *Our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed...¹⁷ For our affliction ...is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:16-17)*

¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18)*

⁶ *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith (proven character), being much more precious (valuable) than gold that perishes, though it is tested (refined through constant use) by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ... (1 Pet. 1:6-7)*