

## **Five Eternal Crowns (Eternal Rewards – Part 2 of 2)**

(appropriate for Mid Schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily, November 2018

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

Please also see, "Overcoming Temptation (Eternal Rewards – Part 1 of 2) at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

Eventually, at some point in your Christian life, as you seek to follow and obey Christ, you'll come to a point where you realize that doing the things God wants you to do is difficult. You'll begin to realize that doing what God wants you to do requires sacrifice – sacrifice of your time, your money, and your emotional energy. There will be fun things that you will want to do and you'll realize that you may have to "not do" some of these fun things in order to make time to do the things God wants you to do. You'll look around and, of course, the non-Christians won't be doing these things. But you'll also notice that many of the other Christians aren't doing them either and it doesn't seem to bother them. And you'll ask yourself, "Why am I doing these things?"

At this point perhaps you'll begin to have a discussion with yourself and it might go something like this: You're a Christian, right? (right) God has given you eternal life as a free gift hasn't He? (yes) No matter what you do or don't do God has promised that you will live with Him in paradise forever, isn't that right? (right) And isn't it true that God will love you just as much regardless of what you do or don't do? (yes) Now we don't have to mention this to anyone else but just between you and me didn't God promise, when it's all said and done, didn't He promise to forgive you for all of your sins? (yes) Since all of these things are true, it seems to me that the smart thing to do here – now we don't have to tell anyone else about this – but deep down in our heart of hearts it seems to me that the smart thing to do is to be a pew potato. (What?) You know, a pew potato, you go to church and plant yourself in the pew. You enjoy the music and the message, you socialize with your friends, you take advantage of all the fun, entertaining things the church has to offer – and you let someone else do the hard work and make the sacrifices. Because after all, it's not like you're going to lose out on anything, right? Am I right?

When this temptation comes upon you what will you say? What will you do? God knows that we will face this temptation and so He created an eternal reward system to help us deal with this. When we stand before God at the end of our life He wants us to be able to look at the reward He has for us, compare it to the hard work and sacrifices we made out of love for Him and devotion to Him, and say to ourselves "I am so glad I made those sacrifices, I only have one regret, I wish I had done more". God has created His reward system so that no one will ever regret serving Him. In our study we will discover that God rewards every act of service we do out of love and devotion to Him. We will also discover that, in addition, God has special rewards or "crowns" for faithful service in 5 areas. In this study you will learn what the name of each crown is and what it is given for and you'll come away with a new appreciation for how much God really values what we do for Him.

### **1 Corinthians 3:8-15**

**Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

God rewards our labor or effort and the quality of our work. He does not reward the quantity of our work since that is a function of our spiritual gifts and design. For example, God will reward you for your faithfulness in evangelism regardless of the numerical result, not everyone is designed to be a Billy Graham. If you are faithful to share the gospel with one person at a time and you do an excellent job at it your reward in heaven will be just as great as the mass evangelist who was also faithful. God rewards quality, not quantity.

Ask them what the foundation is. It is Christ. Draw a concrete slab on the board labeled “Christ”. The foundation is our salvation. Now as we live our lives we build on this slab. What is built on the slab? Gold, Silver, Precious Stones, Wood, Hay, Straw. The Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones are those acts of service and sacrifice we did out of love and devotion to God. Whenever you make a sacrifice to serve God and obey Him God lays up a reward in your account in heaven, and you can never lose it. Are these rewards valuable? If someone dumped a truck load of gold on your driveway would that change your experience of life on the Earth? Of course it would. In the same way these eternal rewards are going to have real value in the economy of eternity. God does not tell us the details but we will be very glad to have these rewards. What are the Wood, Hay, and Straw? These are our sins and worldly loves. As our lives pass through the fire of purification these impure things are burned up. The good things left after the fire are what God gives us a reward for. Our lives are then purified for entry into heaven. The foundation, our salvation, is not damaged by the fire therefore this is a fire of purification, not of punishment. Nevertheless, a Christian who has lived his life for himself in disregard of God will suffer loss as he sees what he gave his life to burned up.

### **Special Rewards for Long-term, Faithful Service in God’s Top 5 Priority Areas**

In addition to these eternal rewards that we can’t lose, God also has special rewards for faithful or exceptional service in five areas. Knowing what these five areas are can help us set priorities for how we spend our resources on the earth. If you think about soldiers, almost every soldier has some medals. Some have a few and some have a lot. Think of these as similar to eternal rewards. Every Christian will receive eternal rewards - some a few and some a lot.

But in addition to the normal medals that soldiers receive, there are special medals known as Congressional Medals of Honor. These medals are given out very rarely for exceptionally heroic service. Very few soldiers receive a Medal of Honor. In a similar fashion God has His version of the Medals of Honor. In the Bible these special awards are called Crowns. Unlike other eternal rewards, Crowns can be lost. Even if this happens, the person still gets all of the eternal rewards for efforts made toward a crown so it’s still a win for you no matter what.



Army

Navy

Air Force

Another characteristic of the Crowns is that no one is disqualified from any of the 5 Crowns by the circumstances of their lives. We’ll talk more about this as we go.

### **James 1:12 – Crown of Life (Perseverance Under Trial)**

**Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

The Crown of Life is awarded to those who have persevered under trial. When you get to a point in life where there is nothing positive about being a Christian what are you going to do? When you have nothing encouraging you to follow Christ will you continue? God is watching closely to see what you do. Are you going to quit or are you going to persevere under trial?

### **Revelation 2:10**

**Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

Some people think the crown of life mentioned here is not a real crown but a symbol representing eternal life. However, the next verse clarifies why this is not the case.

### **Revelation 3: 10-11**

**Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.**

Unlike rewards for individual acts of service, crowns can be lost. Since we know from other passages that eternal life cannot be lost, the crown of life cannot be a symbol of salvation, rather it is a special award called a crown we receive from God as a reward for our faithfulness.

God has not disqualified anyone from receiving a crown due to the circumstances of their life. For example, God never states that the source of the trial is important – only our faith and perseverance.

For example, many trials in life are a result of sin. However, if you confess the sin God will forgive you and not hold it against you. But you may still have to go through a trial as a result of the sin. The issue is not how the trial came about. The issue is how you respond to it. Are you going to quit or persevere under trial? If you persevere under trial God will still give you the Crown of Life.

What are some examples: **Difficult marriage:** You can quit or you can persevere under trial. **Prison:** You can give up or spend the time praying for the nations, sharing the gospel and leading Bible studies in prison.

### **II Timothy 3:12**

**Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**

Living a godly life is another source of trial. The bottom line is that sin results in trials and godliness also results in trials. The trials are different in nature but our perseverance during them results in the same crown.

### **II Timothy 4:7-8 – Crown of Righteousness (Moral Purity & Wholeheartedness)**

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

The Crown of Righteousness is given to those who truly look forward to the Second Coming of Christ. Their hearts are not attached to this world.

### **I John 3:2-3**

**Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

This verse shows us that those that look forward to Christ's return purify themselves from a love of the world system and other things. This crown is given for moral purity and wholeheartedness in following Christ. These people are also characterized as people who look forward to the Second Coming of Christ.

**(James 4:4) - You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

If you knew Jesus was returning tomorrow what would your initial reaction be. Would you think that was great or would you regret that you would miss some things? It reveals your heart doesn't it?

**(I John 2:28) - Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.**

If you had to stand before God today, would you be ashamed or confident?

If you talk to someone who has had a loved one die you might occasionally hear them say something like, "Not a day goes by that I don't think about them". By this they mean that on some days they may think of them for a few seconds and on other days for a longer period of time but not a day goes by that they don't think of them at least once.

Is that how the Second Coming of Christ is for you? Not a day goes by that you don't think about the Second Coming of Christ – some days for a few seconds, more on other days. It reveals your heart doesn't it?

### **I Thessalonians 2:19-20 – Crown of Exultation / Joy (Witnessing, Sharing the Gospel)**

**For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? <sup>20</sup>For you are our glory and joy.**

You have to dig a little to understand what this crown is given for. Paul is writing to people he has personally shared the Gospel with and led to Christ. So, this crown is given for faithfulness in sharing the Gospel.

### **(Philippians 4:1)**

**Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.**

### **(Matthew 10:32-33)**

**"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. <sup>33</sup>"But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.**

Jesus will confess you before God if you confess Him before men.

### **(Mark 8:38)**

**"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."**

If we are ashamed of Him and His words He will be ashamed of us.

### **Luke 12:8-9**

**"And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; <sup>9</sup>but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.**

Jesus will confess us before the angels of God if we confess Him before men.

If we have been faithful in sharing our faith before men Jesus is going to take us around to God the Father and to the angels and talk about how proud he is of us. Some of the angels already know us because they were on missions with us.

### **I Peter 5:1-4 – Crown of Glory (Disciplemaking, Shepherding, Helping others Grow)**

**Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.**

This crown is given for faithfulness in shepherding or helping other Christians grow.

This includes pastoring churches, teaching Sunday school, meeting one-on-one with someone to disciple them, etc.

Now let me ask you a question: On any Sunday, in every church in America there is a shortage of people in one particular ministry area. What area is it? Working with children. Why is that? Because there is no glory in it. No one is going to come up to you and say, "Wow, you must be a spiritual giant, you teach kindergarten"! Yet God does not specify that this Crown is only for helping adults. If you want the Crown of Glory (notice the name) and you can't find any adults that want your help, just volunteer to help out with a children's ministry.

Someday there will be many surprised Christians who are asked to step aside so that those who have worked faithfully with children can come forward to receive their crown.

### **Daniel 12:1-3**

**"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. <sup>2</sup> Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.**

This verse tells us that in heaven those who have served faithfully will shine brightly. Our level of commitment to Christ while on the earth will be revealed, to some degree, in our appearance in Heaven. The closest thing on the earth I can compare it to is a military uniform. Without ever talking to the person, if you know how to decode the symbols on the uniform, you can determine in just a few seconds the person's level of authority, their technical skills, whether they are good at shooting a rifle, flying a plane, driving a tank, jumping out of perfectly good airplanes, etc. You can tell if they have ever been in combat and if they are a true hero or not. To some degree our faithfulness in this life will affect our appearance in Heaven.

Will we be jealous of people whose reward is greater than ours? No. Why? Because it's Heaven! The rewards are given by a perfect Judge and we will no longer have a sin nature. As a result, we will be genuinely happy for the rewards others receive from God with no hint of envy or jealousy.

### **I Corinthians 9:24-27 – Imperishable Wreath (Disciplines of the Christian Life)**

**Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup> but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**

Different translations call this crown different things but the best translation for it is "the Imperishable Wreath". In this passage Paul compares the Christian life to those competing in "The Games" (the ancient Olympic Games). In the ancient Olympic Games the winners did not get a gold medal like they do today. Instead a wreath of plant material was put on their head. Why? This was their crown.

Have you ever seen pictures of an ancient ruler like Julius Caesar? They often are shown with a wreath of plant material on their heads. Why? That was their crown.



This was demonstrated in the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece. In honor of the creation of the ancient Olympic Games by Greece, the 2004 Olympic champions were given a "perishable wreath" to place on their heads (in addition to their medals).

They disciplined themselves to receive a wreath on their heads. We are to discipline ourselves and push ourselves just as hard as they do. They do it to receive a "perishable wreath" but we do it to receive an "imperishable wreath" that will last for eternity.



Is there ever a day the athlete wakes up and doesn't feel like doing his training routine? Yet, he does it anyway in pursuit of the prize. In the same way, God has a special crown for those who are faithful in the disciplines of the Christian life that have the characteristics of athletic training.

What are the characteristics of athletic training? (every day, hard, requires self-control, pays off in long run, not short run, they do it even when they don't feel like it).

What would be some examples in the Christian Life? (Quiet Time, Daily Prayer, Scripture Memory, Bible Study, Daily Bible Reading, etc.) Think of them as different Olympic events. You can medal in shot put, javelin, the mile relay, etc. In the same way you can receive the Imperishable Wreath for exceptional service in any one of the spiritual disciplines.

So, the picture God wants to communicate to us is one that we can all relate to. We are exercising daily self-control in the disciplines of the Christian life – those things that have the characteristics of athletic training.

We push ourselves just as hard as someone who is trying to win the Olympic gold medal. Why? Because we want to receive a special crown from God Himself. A crown named the Imperishable Wreath - one of the 5 crowns God has available to give out at the judgment.

Stay encouraged. Just because you miss days here and there it's OK. Think of yourself as an Olympic athlete. Missing a few days of training here and there is not going to make much difference. But if you start missing weeks and months it will. So, if you miss a day that's fine just get back to it tomorrow.

#### **(II Timothy 2:15)**

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.**

Bible Study, Scripture Memory

#### **(Psalm 5:3)**

**In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.**

Quiet Time, Prayer

#### **Value of Rewards**

Crowns allow us to worship God more fully.

*"Oh but Mr. Daily, we are just going to cast our crowns back at Jesus' feet so, is it really worth the trouble?"*

Yes, it is. Remember, you still get the rewards that God put into your account for each act of sacrifice along the way toward the Crown and these rewards have real value in the economy of eternity. You will never regret the sacrifices you made when you compare them to the rewards God will give you.

Also, no matter what you do with the crown, the honor you received when God gave you the crown in front of everyone can never be taken away.

PS: If you want a Crown, pray and ask God to help you work on it and He will.





**Army**

**Navy**

**Air Force**



**Congressional Medals of Honor**







**QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD**

***JEREMIAH 15:16***

**THEME: *Five Eternal Crowns (Eternal Rewards – Part 2 of 2)***

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 3:8-15***

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *James 1:12, Revelation 2:10, Revelation 3:10-11, II Timothy 3:12***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 10:32-33, Mark 8:38, Luke 12:8-9***

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