



"If there be no enemy, there's no fight. If no fight, no victory, and if no victory, there is no crown."

—Thomas Carlyle

**08-Jan-21**

## **The Crowns of Success (Part Two)**

In Part One, we began examining the biblical idea of five heavenly crowns and what these rewards mean for Christians. We will continue our examination by considering the fourth of these, *the imperishable crown*, mentioned in [I Corinthians 9:25](#): "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown."

The prize Paul refers to is the victory in the Panhellenic Games, which were four separate sports festivals held in ancient Greece. The Olympic games were the oldest and most venerable, and the others were the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games. Wikipedia notes:

The games are also known as the stephanitic games, because winners received only a garland for victory. (Stephanitic derives from *stephanos*, the Attic Greek word for crown.) No financial or material prizes were awarded . . . The Olympic games awarded a garland of olive leaves; the Pythian games, a garland of laurel

leaves; the Nemean games, a crown of wild celery, and the Isthmian games, a garland of pine leaves in the archaic period, [and later] one of dried celery . . .

Thus, Paul describes the athletic rewards as "perishable." The apostle Peter explains, however, that [God](#) has called us to "an inheritance *incorruptible*" ([I Peter 1:4](#); emphasis ours), the same Greek word Paul uses in [I Corinthians 9:25](#) for "imperishable." Our reward, our symbolic laurel for victory, will never rot, tarnish, or vanish. Paul characterizes our spiritual contest a battle ([Ephesians 6:12](#)), and to the victor—the overcomer—goes the spoils, the rewards, which he affirms Christ will give us at His return:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trump shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ([I Corinthians 15:52-53](#))

Fifth, consider *the crown of life*, mentioned in [Revelation 2:10](#):

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The crown of life is also called the "martyr's crown." In Greek, Stephen's name is *Stephanos*, meaning "crown." By his faithfulness until death, Stephen brought glory to God, making him the first Christian martyr or witness. In [Isaiah 44:8](#), God tells us not to fear or be afraid, for we are His witnesses to His unique position in all the universe. We may not be martyred, but we are dead to [sin](#), and we are to crucify our flesh with its desires. Paul exhorts us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, given in any way that God sees fit ([Romans 12:1](#)).

In [John 12:25](#), Jesus uses two different words for "life": "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Life in this world is the Greek word *psyche* (*Strong's* #5590), the seat

of feelings, desires, and affections. His second word for "life" is *z* (*Strong's #2222*), "the absolute fulness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God."

In his [Forerunner article](#) on this crown, Martin Collins writes:

The crown of life consists of eternal, imperishable living! It represents victory over our earlier, perishable life of sin. In the Millennium and for all eternity, we will wear our crown of life as an emblem of victory, righteousness, and honor as befits those who have been obedient and faithful to Christ.

Before we close, we should consider [Isaiah 62:1-3](#):

For Zion's sake I will not hold My [peace](#), and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Each victorious Christian in this age will be given immortality and crowned at the [return of Jesus Christ](#). Although each will receive special and specific rewards, the New Testament's five crowns of victory are all part of one encompassing and greater symbolic, triumphant crown.

In [Revelation 3:12](#), the overcomers are described as pillars forever in the temple of God. In this verse, "overcomes" can also be translated as "conquers," "prevails," or "achieves victory." In the previous verse, [Revelation 3:11](#), Jesus urges Christians to "hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (*stephanos*), a singular laurel of victory.

An additional New Testament crown is not a crown of reward: the crown of thorns that Jesus wore during His crucifixion. In a way, though, the crown of thorns that Roman soldiers forced onto His head was an ironic *stephanos*, but one that we can understand to symbolize His victory over sin, becoming the Redeemer. His victory assures us that most of humanity will ultimately be

saved ([Romans 11:26-29](#)). He assures us in [John 16:33](#) that He has overcome—conquered, prevailed, achieved victory over—[the world](#). The apostle John writes that, through this victory, Jesus is the appeasing sacrifice, not only for the sins of the elect, but also for the entirety of repentant humanity ([I John 2:2](#)).

Even so, the five crowns mentioned in the New Testament are specifically for those called now. God's elect have the opportunity for special responsibilities in God's Kingdom ([John 14:2](#)), and when Jesus returns, we will indeed reign as kings with Him ([Revelation 11:15](#), 18). He Himself will wear many crowns—diadems, this time—and will bring His rewards for us with Him: "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to His work" ([Revelation 22:12](#)).

- John Reiss

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## Church News & Special Announcements

We are very sad to report that **Mike Ford** died at 10:15 EST tonight. **Phyllis** would like you to know their family very much appreciates all of your prayers and support throughout this very difficult time.

Cards may be sent to:  
Phyllis Ford  
393 Edwards Rd.  
Oxford, GA 30054-4103

08-Jan-21

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## New Transcripts

[1188c: How Was It Accomplished So Easily? \(Part One\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 07-Dec-13

[1189c: How Was It Accomplished So Easily? \(Part Two\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 14-Dec-13

**[1287: The Source of Church Characteristics \(Part Two\)](#)**

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 19-Sep-15

**[1577c: Remember](#)**

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 02-Jan-21

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## **Prayer Requests**

New prayer request updates have been posted for the following people:

**[Josie Cochran](#)**

**[Josie Cochran](#)**

**[Dan Fletcher](#)**

**[Dan Fletcher](#)**

**[Mike Ford](#)**

**[Cal Hunt](#)**

**[Sheila Johnson](#)**

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

**[Remembering God's Gifts, Promises, and Rewards](#)**

by John O. Reid (1930-2016)

God gives us the capability of remembering in order to learn and retain

lessons, fortifying us in the midst of grave trials. During these times of intense distress and tribulation, God expects that we use our memories to reflect upon His gifts, promises, and rewards. His gifts include His Holy Spirit enabling eternal life, spiritual gifts to enrich the church, and inspiration during a trial. God's promises include the assurance that He cannot lie, that godliness has immediate and long-term profit, and that He will never, never, never, never leave us. God's rewards include attaining the mind of God, membership in His family with a new name, an office or responsibilities in the Kingdom of God-dependent upon our current efforts (at overcoming and growing) related to the abilities, talents, and opportunities He has given us.

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## From the Archives: Featured Article

### [Is Heaven the Reward of the Saved?](#)

by Staff

Most of Christianity believes humans go to heaven or hell after death, but is this so? This belief does not originate in the Bible—and in fact, the Bible reveals a very different Christian destiny.

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## Featured Audio Schedule

### Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study will be **Amos (Part Four)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh** on **Friday 08-Jan-21**. The Bible Study will be continuously available from **6:00 pm Friday** until **12:00 pm Saturday (EST)**.

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