

## Crowns for the Christian

*"If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward". 1 Cor. 3:14*

We often sing the hymn, *"Glad day, glad day! Is it the crowning day? I'll live for today, nor anxious be; Jesus, my Lord I soon shall see; Glad day, glad day! Is it the crowning day?"* Depending upon the song leader, we may sing that song as a congregation with real gusto, but do we sing it with personal conviction? Do we sing with *"with the spirit and ... with the understanding also."* (1 Cor. 14:15)?

When it comes to a study of eternal rewards for the believer, the crowns figure predominantly in the NT scriptures. Five are listed, if the imperishable crown is considered as one of the five and not just the conditions that exist in my life to earn the other four (1 Cor. 9:25). There is the martyr's crown as some call it (Rev. 2:10), the soul-winner's crown (1 Thess. 2:19); the shepherd's crown (1 Pet. 5:4) and the crown of righteousness for loving the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). Beside the commendation of our Lord (Matt. 25:21), there are other references to eternal rewards, such as administrative privileges during the millennium (Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:18) as well as others (e.g., Rev. 2:17). But the spotlight seems fixed clearly on the crowns as a primary means of reward for faithful service to the Master.

For many years, I thought that crowns were somewhat of an "automatic." In other words, my thinking was that I would stand in line and receive the crowns that were coming to me for things "done in the body" (2 Cor. 5:10) – that is, while I was alive on earth. It was as if they were coming to me simply because I was a believer and knew the Lord. Maybe many people think that way as well but it is not quite what the Word of God conveys. Take a moment or two to ponder the passages related to these crowns – some tough stuff when you think about it! A crown for suffering persecution? When have those conditions existed in my life? Certainly, there is no comparison to the testimonies of those contained in *"Foxe's Book of Martyrs."* And enduring temptation? Perhaps I lost the opportunity more than a few times by not following the Lord when tested by Him or tempted by the adversary. And how many people have I led to Christ? Paul called the Thessalonians and the Philippians, his "crown" (1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1). Paul must have had many of these crowns when you figure in the assemblies he helped to establish at Corinth and in the region of Galatia and other places on his missionary journeys. The fact that he knew nothing against himself (1 Cor. 4:4) - that his life was above reproach - is pretty strong evidence that he qualified for a crown of righteousness for a holy life and for awaiting the Savior's return.

When I think of the import of all this, I hang my head in shame. How many crowns will I receive in the day when rewards are handed out at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:14)? It is a far cry from just thinking I will get crowns from the Lord for simply showing up on the Lord's Day with my Bible in hand. Rather it is living for Him daily and letting the Spirit of the Lord and His Word transform my inner life that I may be more like Him (2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 1:27). It is for serving Him that we might receive a full reward (2 John 8).

On the other hand, and as an encouragement to our readers, lest we think we may come to Him "empty-handed," remember that the Lord knows the heart that truly loves and trusts in Him. He will not be unmindful of service done in His Name, even though we feel that we have fallen far short. As the hymn states, *"Let us then be true and faithful, trusting serving every day, just one glimpse of Him in glory, shall the toils of life repay."*

*O! the crowning-day is coming is coming by-and-by, when our Lord shall come in power and glory from on high!  
O, the glorious sight will gladden each waiting, watchful eye, In the crowning-day that's coming by-and-by!*