

2 Timothy 3:10-4:8 The crown of righteousness.

Last time we looked at THE IMPERISHABLE CROWN -given for faithfulness as we walk lives of holiness, keeping on to the end. Today we look at the crown of righteousness.

Introduction

Paul is facing execution, in prison and is writing to his spiritual son Timothy in Ephesus. His final, and maybe most important message exhorting Timothy to keep on preaching, but to be patient for then as now few people really want their lives changed and to conform to God's word and will. Do your job faithfully and don't pander to those who just want entertainment - whether it's a diet solely of old traditional hymns and lyrics, preaching with meaningless hoyle, signs and wonders, or the spiritual aerobic brigade (choruses and dance). Its hard work feeding people who only want chips and coke? Then Paul reflects of his life.

"The time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"

Look at that word "departure." it is a translation of a Greek word that conjures up several pictures.

One of them is of a man taking down his tent, rolling it up, getting ready to march. Another picture is of an individual untying a boat that for some time has been moored to the wharf, and letting the boat begin to sail forth across the waters.

There is nothing horrifying about death. Paul says, "The time has come for me to let loose the mooring; the time has come for me to set sail for the other side."

Paul; says "I have fought a good fight." The word for fought here is not a word that speaks of a soldier who has fought a battle. It describes a wrestler who contended in the games of Rome and wrestled well. It is the Greek word *agon* - from which we get agony, so the Christian life wasn't easy! The Apostle is saying, "I have done a lot of wrestling in my life, and I have wrestled well. I am not ashamed of my life."

Paul says I have finished "the race". Of those who start the race, how few finish well. Finishing is what it is all about, as it was for last week's Tanzanian runner.

The judgement seat

And so Paul will stand at the judgement seat of Christ.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek. Our phrase "judgement seat" is translated from one Greek word; **bema**, it was a raised platform in a public square in Greek cities. We saw last week that after the marathon the man who came first may not win if he is disqualified by the judges on the arena bema.

The bema has a context outside of sport, announcements were made from the bema, and citizens were praised for their contributions to the city. The bema "judgement seat" is associated with rewards rather than punishments.

The "judgement seat" was not in a courtroom, nor does it imply that those who appear before it are criminals. When Jesus returns, every believer will appear before his berna to " receive what is due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad." "Good" here is **agathos**, which means "beneficial, helpful." "Bad" is **phaulon**, which means "worthless," of "no account." Phaulon never means "bad" in the sense of evil or sinful.

Paul will receive a "Crown of righteousness." literally translated is "a crown for doing right." given by Righteous King Jesus. This is in sharp contrast to Paul who had stood before unrighteous judge Nero and did not receive what was fair. This crown is "in store" or "laid up" for Paul where moth and rust do not corrupt nor where thieves come in and steal.

This crown is given to you for doing right. "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun." Psalm 37:5-6 Paul has urged young Timothy to "pursue righteousness" 2 Timothy 2:22 (and 1 Tim 6:11) [One of the functions of scripture is to train us in righteousness 2 Timothy 3:16]

The Second Coming

"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 longed for his appearing.**" 2 Timothy 4:8

A crown for doing right and a crown for looking forward to his coming again.

I am not going to explain the different theories or go into arguments about eschatology. Various denominations of Christians differ in their interpretations of the manner and order of Jesus' return, yet we all believe that He will indeed return and this is the main thing, for the Second Coming is a very important doctrine in Christianity. In fact, it has a large place in the Scripture, being prophesied hundreds of times from Genesis to Revelation. In the New Testament the Second Coming of Jesus is spoken of over three hundred times, and there are whole chapters that deal with the Second Coming, such as Matthew 24 and 25; Mark 13 and Luke 21. Some books of the New Testament deal mainly with the Second Coming, such as the book of Revelation and 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.

Jesus Himself spoke of His return in a factual way, just like He had spoken of the destruction of the temple - a prophecy that was fulfilled not long afterwards, thus confirming that, likewise, when He spoke of His return, it must also be taken literally and that it will indeed come to pass (Matthew 24:34).

Paul did not say, "Now, if you fight a good fight you will receive the Crown of Righteousness." He did not say, "If you run a good race, you will receive the Crown of Righteousness." He did not say, "If you keep the faith, you will receive the Crown of Righteousness." He says, "If you love His appearing, you will."

Every man who loves the appearing of the Lord will receive the crown, because you cannot love His appearing without fighting a good fight, without running a good race, without guarding the faith.

How do you get to love his appearing?" One of the best ways to get to love His appearing is to love Him. Do we really love the Lord? I can't love someone and not want to see him and be with him.

A **"crown of righteousness"** is set aside for those who long for Jesus to return. Do you think that there will be people in heaven who don't love or long for the appearing of Jesus? No, of course all of us who are saved love his appearing, thus all of us are going to get crowns of righteousness.

And the more eagerly we look ahead to Jesus' return, the less likely we are to be attracted by sin.

The Reward

Jeremiah 23:6 says "In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness." And Paul says 1 Corinthians 1:30 "Jesus.... is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

Christ is the **"righteousness"** of His people, and he gives a **"crown of righteousness"** and his robe of righteousness to wear - but that's another sermon.

Some may try to take this crown from you by trying to get you to give up looking for the Lord's return.

This can happen in two ways.

Many even in the Church are not interested in speaking about the Second Coming.

While others set a time scale for God, like the JW's and when God does not keep the man made timetable – the result can be discouragement and loss of faith.

We may be living in the end times, Paul is saying that those Christians who are alert to and are anxiously looking for the Lord to return are the ones who are keeping the faith, and are given this wonderful promise of receiving the crown of righteousness.

Many people do not want the Lord to come now. They want Him to delay His coming. They say, "not yet, there are so many people we have to reach," but they usually are not the ones who are witnessing. Some are satisfied with their current life and do not want it changed. These people do not understand what is in heaven, the joy, and the love that is there. Some just are not sure about their own salvation and do not have the courage to seek the answer. They are afraid they might be embarrassed or ridiculed if they admit their insecurity. They think they are believers because they were born into a Christian family and have gone to church all their lives, but have not made that individual decision for Christ.

"Those who realise they are but strangers and pilgrims here, and have set their affections on things above, will not be content until the Lord comes again ... The crown of Righteousness is awarded to all those who practice a life of righteousness and are constantly 'looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ'"
Swindoll p30/1

Homework

2 Peter 3:11 asks the most pertinent question plainly, "what kind of people ought you to be ... as you look forward to the day of God?" (NIV)

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