

Crowns of Eternal Reward

by Denny Kenaston

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking crowns of eternal reward by living according to God's word, seeking wisdom, being a virtuous woman, and raising faithful grandchildren.

Duration: 1:30:25

Scripture: Proverbs 4:14

Topics: "Rewards"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a goal and being determined to achieve it. He uses the example of a young man who was determined to make it to the Olympic soccer team, highlighting the focus and dedication required to reach a goal. The speaker then challenges the audience to reflect on their own goals and priorities for the year ahead. He also discusses the significance of living a purposeful Christian life, not just going through the motions, but actively seeking to fulfill God's calling and making disciples. The sermon encourages believers to persevere through challenges and not shy away from the 'pain' that comes with following Christ.

Transcript

All right, this morning, I want to bring a message, a message that I brought to the missionaries three weeks ago. And as I was reflecting upon the truth of the message, I also felt it would be very good for us here to consider the same. Paul spoke these words at the end of his life.

I trust that we also can speak the same words. He spoke these words in 2 Timothy chapter 4. He said, I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course.

I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all them also, that love His appearing.

If you want to open your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 2, I would like to consider this subject this morning, crowns of eternal reward, crowns of eternal reward. Also, I had this thought, just in sitting there in my seat and reflecting, as I think about all the missionaries that are over there in Africa. Of course, this message, crowns of eternal rewards, it has many implications to those missionaries that are on the field.

But I said to them, and I'll say it to you also this morning, we do not have a Bible school. We don't take our best youth and send them away to a Bible school, and then bring them back to the church and make them ministers. That is done in this land of ours many times.

We don't do that. We don't have a Bible school like that. However, we do have a Bible school.

And it's on the other side of the ocean over there. As I watch and see the work that God does in the hearts of the missionaries, both the long-term and the short-term ones, it is beautiful to behold what God is doing in their lives. I told them this, what you are gaining over here, in your six months or your three years, will take you years to gain back there on the other side of the ocean.

It is a Bible school, and it is training our young people for many years to come. It is making soldiers out of them. But, blessed be God, this morning, we know, when the battle is over, we shall wear a crown.

Amen? A crown. Crowns of eternal rewards. Crowns that fade not away.

Think about it. Reading this morning in Hebrews chapter 2, from verse 5, we find these words, For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come. Now, Paul is speaking, referencing chapter 1 of the book of Hebrews.

And in chapter 1, he speaks about the world to come. But here he says that God did not put the world to come in subjection to angels. But who is he putting the world to come in subjection to? Do you know? It is you and I, brothers and sisters.

He is going to put the world to come in subjection to you and I. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou, God, madest him, man, a little lower than the angels. Just a little lower than the angels.

Thou crownest him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.

But now we see not yet all things put under him. And I think we can all agree with that statement. You look around.

It doesn't seem like the world is in subjection unto us. It seems like the world is going its own way. It doesn't seem like the animals are in subjection to us.

Walk through the jungle in a night with a lion and see how much the animals are in subjection to us. So, this world is not in subjection unto us yet. But it's coming.

Now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus. Hallelujah. Who was made a little lower than the angels, just like we, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.

For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. Christ, through his death, burial and resurrection, brings many sons unto glory, or brings many sons and daughters into the place where they can be crowned with glory and honor. Just like we see the life of Christ crowned with glory and honor, do

we not? As you study him in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you see Christ's life crowned with glory and with honor.

As you step in there, in Matthew chapter 17, and you see Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, crowned with glory and honor. And you go a little bit further and see him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, crowned with glory and honor. In the same ways, brothers and sisters, God wants to crown us, his people, with glory and honor.

Some in this life, and some in the age to come, and some in eternity, which is way down the road yet. Crowned with glory and honor. That's God's will, that's God's plan for each and every one of us.

What does it mean to us today? How does it apply to us today? Well, we all know what a crown is. Kings and queens are crowned with a crown. In Bible days, they put a crown, a physical crown, on the head of a king.

Crowns are used for public honor, for outstanding accomplishments. It may be a gold crown, it may be a wreath that is put on the head, but nevertheless, it's done for public honor, for outstanding accomplishments. Crowns were used and placed on the head of a general after a victory in a battle.

Crowns were used and are used today for the athletic games, the Olympics, when the runner has run his race and he came in first place. They put a crown on his head and hang a medal around his neck. He's given a place of honor.

And crowns were also used for holy consecration. The high priest was crowned. They put a fair mitre upon his head.

These are examples of a crown. But think about it. What is a crown? A crown is something that draws attention to an individual for something that they've done.

A special accomplishment. A special purpose. A special office.

Crowns are used for these things. I wonder this morning, what will you be known for? What will I be known for? What will bring you to honor? What will draw attention to you? What is your crown as you sit here this morning? What is your crown? Is it cooking? Is it sewing? Is it a business that you have? What is your crown this morning? Remember, a crown is that which draws attention to us. What is our crown? What will we be known for? What are we known for? These are good questions to ask.

In today, the Olympics, they strive, they fight for a corruptible crown. They give their whole life to put that crown on their head. And once they've obtained it, it is their crown.

It's what everybody knows them for. You give the name. Now, I can't give any of those names.

I think the Olympics are ridiculous. But for people who find those things interesting, you give a name, everyone knows. Everyone will say, oh, he ran a mile, you know, in 3 minutes and 55 seconds.

Or, oh, he threw the javelin further than anybody else in the whole world. That's his crown. That's it.

That's what he's known for. Seems a bit ridiculous to me. But that's the way it is, you know.

That you would work your whole life, or years and years of your life, just to be known for how you handle a ball, or how far you threw a javelin, or how high you could jump, or whatever. It seems ridiculous to me. But that's what they're known for.

Crowns of eternal reward. That's what we want to be known for. I don't want to be known for how big my business was.

I don't want to be known for how well I could play basketball. God forbid that I would be known for things like that. I want to be known for things that last for all of eternity.

Both in this life and in the one to come. Imagine how sad it would be, and I'm not sure where to slot these guys, but imagine how sad it would be if you would get to glory, and all your life you spent kicking a ball around the field, you know. You had your little prayer before the game and you kicked the ball around the field, and all your life you kicked that ball around the field.

You wore yourself out kicking that ball around the field, and here in this life everybody knew you for how well you could kick that ball around the field. But oh, bless God, when you stand before God in eternity, that little ball will look absolutely absurd. We all have a life to live, brothers and sisters, every single one of us.

Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ is going to last in eternity. Kicking the ball around is not going to last in eternity.

It won't matter a flip how fast you ran in eternity. You'll hang your head in shame if you gave your life for an earthly crown, and everyone knew you, and everyone clapped for you, and everyone stood and honored you because of how fast you could run. When you stand before God in eternity, that won't mean a thing.

Every one of us have a life to live. Twenty-four hours in each day, seven days in each one of our weeks, twelve months in every year, and years of time go by, and every one of us have a life to live. Crowns, that's what we're after.

Crowns of eternal reward. Some of those crowns we see and experience in this life. Some of them we won't see until later.

But all of them are crowns of eternal reward. I want to look at a few of them this morning, just to stimulate our thoughts a bit. The first one we find in the book of Proverbs.

You can do the same thing. You can get your concordance out and look up the word crown and find these in the Bible. I think it's good for us to notice that in every one of these crowns of eternal reward, not a one of them is a physical crown that goes on top of your head.

Not a one of them. In Proverbs, in chapter four, we have the promise of a crown. And I believe it's a promise of a crown in this life, but also a crown in the life to come.

If you wear this crown in this life, you will also wear it in the one to come. And that's what's sweet and blessed about eternal crowns. They last from now all the way into eternity.

They're worth having, brothers and sisters. Solomon speaks to us about wisdom. Wisdom, being able to evaluate all of life from God's perspective.

Wisdom, that is having the answers when you make decisions in your life. Wisdom, knowing the word of God and knowing the God of the word. These are just definitions of wisdom.

Wisdom is having taken the word of God and filtered it through life's problems, and you've come up with answers. That's wisdom. And wisdom, in short, is knowing how to live according to the word of God.

Now, that's something worth having, brothers and sisters. Knowing how to live according to the word of God. You will never be sorry if you focus your life on learning how to live according to the word of God.

Listen to what the wisest man in all the earth said about wisdom. He called wisdom a crown of glory. One you can wear in this life.

Chapter 4 and verse 5, it says, Get wisdom. Get understanding. Forget it not.

Neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee. Love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing. Not a ball. Not a race.

Not a car. Not an earthly crown. Wisdom is the principal thing.

Therefore, get wisdom. If you're not going to get anything else, get wisdom. Young people, if you're not going to get anything else, get wisdom.

And if when it's all said and done, if all you have is wisdom, then you won't have gone wrong. I guarantee it. Wisdom is the principal thing.

Therefore, get wisdom. And with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.

She shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace. A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

O hear, O my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many. Now here, Solomon is instructing young men. But every one of us can receive instruction from these words.

You will never go wrong by seeking from the Word of God the wisdom that shows you how to live in this life here on this earth. God promises us, if we will learn how to live according to this book, a crown of glory shall be upon our head. Now that's not a gold crown.

That's not a crown that shines. It's not something that everybody else can look at with their eyes and say, Oh look, he's got a crown on his head. She's got a crown on her head.

No, this is a crown of glory. It, a crown, is that which draws attention to you. And may I say it this way? If you will learn how to live according to the words of this book, it will draw attention to you.

Men will see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. That will happen. This is a crown of eternal rewards.

You get it in this life, you also will have it in the life to come. Let's look at another crown also found in the book of Proverbs. In Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 4, we have a precious verse which I'd like to apply two ways here this morning.

I believe this also is a crown of eternal reward. In Proverbs 12 and verse 4, a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband. But she that maketh ashamed is as rotten as in his bones.

A crown. Here's a crown that's very valuable. Let me apply it both ways.

First of all, to you sisters, those of you that are married, this is a crown that you want on your husband's head. It goes on your husband's head. It doesn't go on your head.

It goes on your husband's head. But I promise you, it will gain you a crown which will go on your head in eternity. The crown of a virtuous woman.

A woman who has learned to live a virtuous life. A woman who is a Proverbs 31 woman is a crown on her husband's head. The Bible teaches that.

I would encourage you wives, as you sit here this morning, you have a husband. Your mind probably is thinking about your husband, even as you're sitting here this morning. Your life will crown his head.

It's God's will that your life be such a life that it crowns your husband's head. Because of you, he can be known in the gates. Because of your righteous life, he will receive glory and honor.

Because of the sacrifices that you make, your husband will be crowned with glory and honor. This is an eternal crown. You want that for your husband.

Young ladies, someday God may give you a husband. That's a nice thought, isn't it? A husband. Lots of young ladies think about husbands.

There's nothing wrong with that. I found sometimes young ladies make lists about what kind of a husband they want to have. He must be this.

He must be this. And he must be this. And I'm not against that.

I'm not against that. But I want to encourage you young ladies. You work on your own virtuous life.

And God will give you a husband after your own kind. Work on a crown. Work on it today.

A virtuous woman is described to us in Proverbs chapter 31. Work on that crown. Someday you will have the privilege to crown a man with your virtuous life.

That's a nice way to look at the whole preparation process. Your life will be lost in the life of a husband. Your virtue will bring honor and glory to a husband someday.

Work on that crown. Work on it every day. Let your life be purified.

Let your life be conformed into the image of that beautiful woman in Proverbs chapter 31. Read over those scriptures and remind yourself what that lady is like in the middle of the day when you find yourself doing the same old things that you do every same old day. Go to Proverbs chapter 31 and remind yourself these are the attributes of a virtuous woman.

And someday God is going to give me the privilege putting my virtuous life on the head of some man and bringing glory and honor to him. Crowns of eternal reward. But may I also just turn the attention for a few minutes over to the other side of the room.

Because we as men, as husbands, we do foolishly if we don't grasp our own responsibility in this verse right here. Are we not the ones who have been called to sanctify our wives by the washing of the water, by the Word? Are we not the ones who have been given the responsibility to guide and direct our wives? To lead them down a path which leads down righteousness in their lives? Every investment of our time that we give to the sanctification, to the building and edification of our wives only puts a crown of glory on our own head. It's your crown, brother.

It's not her crown. It's your crown that you are neglecting or polishing depending on what you do with the time you spend with your wife. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband.

There's a lot of ways you can look at that. We can say to you young men, young men, get a virtuous one. Because God wants you to wear a crown someday.

But to us husbands we have to say, we have some responsibility in the crown that we wear. Do yourself a favor. Sanctify, edify, wash, encourage, bless your wife.

You're only polishing your own crown. Every hour of invested time is only polishing your own crown. These are crowns of eternal rewards.

The next one we'd like to look at is also in Proverbs chapter 17. In Proverbs chapter 17 we find these words. Children's children are the crown of old men.

And the glory or the crown of children are their fathers. Children's children are the crown of old men. This is a crown that you wear in this life.

How do you get this crown? It comes through your grandchildren. It comes through our grandchildren. They put a crown on our head.

The crown of faithful grandchildren. And in this one, brothers and sisters, without a vision you'll never see it. This crown, you have to have some long range goals in order to get this crown.

This crown has a price tag on it. The price tag is 30 years of walking with God. The price tag is 30 years of faithful example.

The price tag is 30 years of training and teaching. 30 years of rigor and discipline. 30 years of late nights and early mornings.

30 years of planning and counseling and overseeing and guiding. But I'm telling you, it's a crown that's worth fighting for, worth laboring for. The crown of faithful grandchildren.

Now for some of us, that crown means more than for other of us. You may be sitting here today. You may just be married one year.

Maybe you're married a half a year. I'm here to tell you this morning, this is a crown that you want to wear. And if you're going to wear this crown, someday you have to be going for it now.

It's not one that you drop in and pick up when you turn 60. You don't just walk in there and say, Okay, I'm 60 years old. Please now give me a crown of faithful grandchildren.

This is a crown you must labor for. Even while the child is even in your womb, you must labor for this crown. It's a beautiful crown.

It's the crown that falls upon the head of the aged as the next generation raises up the next generation to love God and serve God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength. That's a crown that you want to wear someday. My mind goes to one of the weddings that we were at.

And I could have found examples in many of the weddings that I was at the last few months around here. But I happened to be close to Brother Rick and Sister Helen when Tanner and Rebecca were getting married. I happened to be standing close to them at one of those special moments when I got a glimpse of the twinkle in their eye as they stood and saw their son and their daughter-in-law being married and united in holy matrimony.

And I could see the twinkle in their eye as they were receiving the rewards of faithfulness. Twenty some years of faithfulness. Well, brothers and sisters, the crown of faithful grandchildren is another one of those rewards of faithfulness.

You want it. You want to wear that. Someday your hair, your head is going to be gray.

Someday you're going to be old. Someday you're not going to be able to move as fast. Someday you're going to sit in a rocking chair.

Someday the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren are going to gather around your table and you will be rewarded for all your labors with a crown. A beautiful crown. And not only is this a crown in this life, but it's also a crown in the life to come.

God bless God when you get up there and we're all gathered together in Jesus' name. Your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren all gathered around you in glory. What a beautiful crown.

Do you want it? Young men, young married men, dad, do you want it? There's a price tag on it. It'll cost you 30 years of faithful service to your family. But I'm here this morning to tell you, it'll be worth it.

It will be worth it. Let's look at another crown. Hmm... The crown of gray hair that's found on a righteous life.

Gray hair. Proverbs chapter 16 is where we want to read. Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 31 says these words, The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Do you get the picture? Got an old man. Got an old lady. Well stricken in years.

Head is gray. Body is slowing. Bones are aching.

But the life is a life of righteousness. The Bible says, that is a crown of glory on your head. We believe in lifelong Christianity, brothers and sisters.

I'm not talking about being in the church. I'm talking about a righteous life that flows out of a righteous heart that is full of the Holy Ghost. In your old age.

That's a crown. You know anybody like that? I know a few. They are just beautiful, aren't they? I mean, there's something beautiful about them that, you know, Pretty and fair and those words don't even touch it.

They're beautiful. There they sit. Old.

Slower. Gray. Maybe a bit wrinkled.

But a righteous life. Full of faith. And full of the Holy Ghost.

Full of wisdom. And full of the Word of God. Full of wisdom.

And full of a righteous life. There they sit. In the pew of the church.

Just graced with a crown of glory on their head. You'd like to have a crown like that someday? That one doesn't drop in on you when you get old either. You must be working on it now.

If you're going to have it then. Do you want a crown like that? I want a crown like that. I've got my sights set on that one.

And I'm getting older. So, it looks a lot different to me as the years go by. I'm getting older.

And I've got my sights set on that crown. I want that one. That's the kind of old man I want to be.

I know that day is going to come. I want to be found in the way of righteousness. When I'm an old man.

How about you? It's not one that you pick up on your 60th birthday or your 70th birthday. You must be working on it now. In order for that to happen.

You know, I thought about the disciplines of this fasting weekend that we've gone through. You know, this is... Fasting weekends are preventative maintenance in the life of a Christian. Did you notice that? Those of you that fasted.

It's preventative maintenance. It's like, OK. We're moving forward.

We're not going to stay where we are. We're not going to settle for being complacent. We're not going to settle for the ground that we've gained.

We want to ground more. We want to gain more ground in our life. You know, I've been in Africa for three weeks.

And my flesh didn't really want to go on a fast the first day that I came home from Africa. But that's alright. That's alright.

I want to be found in the way of righteousness when I'm an old man. And this is how you get there. You keep on moving forward.

You keep on allowing God to deal with your heart and your life. You keep on learning to walk with God. You keep on learning to be sensitive.

You keep on learning to keep your conscience clear. You keep on learning the Word of God. You don't allow yourself to settle down and become complacent.

And you know, as I'm speaking, you know, I'm looking around the room. And we've got some gray hairs around here. I can see them.

They're coming. Brother, sister, it's not enough to have a gray head. Bless God, there's no crown in that.

It must be a gray head that is found in the way of righteousness. Let's go for it. Crowns of eternal reward.

In this life and in the one to come. Let's look at the next one. The crown of the souls of men.

The crown of the souls of men. Ah, you want to wear that crown? Oh, praise God. Let's read in Philippians chapter 4. Just to get a little glimpse into the Apostle Paul's heart.

Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4 follows Philippians chapter 3. That beautiful, classic chapter on Paul's strivings. Paul's pressing. Paul's pressing life into Christ.

Not being satisfied where he is. Then he begins in chapter 4 and verse 1 with these words. Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, and long for my joy and crown.

So stand fast in the Lord. Or stand fast in the Lord like this. Philippians chapter 3, the whole chapter.

So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. But the point I want you to look at is how Paul saw these dear Philippian believers. He called them his dearly beloved.

His longed for. And he called them, he said, you are my joy and you are my crown. Wow.

Let's read it again in 2 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, I'm sorry. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 17 through 20.

Look at his heart. But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart. Amen.

Thank you, Paul. Endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore, we would have come unto you, even I, Paul, once and again.

But Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy. Now look at that verse.

You know what Paul is saying? He's writing to the Thessalonians and he's saying, the greatest crown, the greatest glory, the greatest rejoicing is to see you in the presence of Jesus Christ at his coming. That's his glory. That's his crown.

Paul saw that. One of the most beautiful things they could put upon his head. You know, we talked about this with the missionaries and I think it was Daniel who said afterwards, that's one of the sweetest dreams that he thinks about when he thinks about heaven.

He thinks about being there with Christ, but he also sees himself surrounded with concomitants. Concomitants in the presence of Christ at his coming. That's his crown.

Oh, don't you want to wear a crown like that? The crown of the souls of men. Oh, we can apply that so many ways. We're here.

We're here as elders and ministers. The crown of the souls of men. Those that we labored for.

Those that we prayed for. Those that we counseled and guided and preached to. That's a crown.

A beautiful crown. We can also apply it to each one of you cell group leaders. And I thought about all of you that are busy in different ministries, in all kinds of different places, and maybe you've been to Africa, or maybe you're going to Africa, or maybe it's the Lancaster street ministry, or maybe it's the Lancaster children's ministry.

All of those things. Paul saw the crown of souls as one of the most valuable things that he could wear, both now and all the way into eternity. I must read it this way to you.

Just to let you know that it is a crown of eternal reward. Daniel said it this way. In the book of Daniel chapter 12 and verse 3. One of my favorite verses.

And they that be wise, teachers, says in my margin. They that be wise, teachers, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament. And they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Daniel is talking about a crown. A crown of souls. A crown of reward.

And for me, for one, I don't think we're going to get a gold crown when we get to heaven, bless God. I'm not planning to pick up some metal piece of gold and put it on my head. I mean, you know, they paved the streets with gold up there.

That's not good enough for me. I don't want a piece of gold to put on my head. I don't believe that's the crown that we're going to get someday, brothers and sisters.

It's an eternal crown. It's a crown of light. It's a crown of glory.

And you'll shine as the stars in the brightness of the firmament of heaven. For all of eternity. For all of eternity.

Amen. Souls. Every one of us needs the crown of souls on our head.

Oh, I want that for you. I want you to experience that. The joy of it.

Of leading a soul to Christ. Of discipling one. Of working with some family in Lancaster City.

Of taking some young person through the dregs of filth and garbage of that city and bringing them out on the other side. I want you to know what that crown is. The crown of the souls of men.

Amen. Spend your life serving others. You'll never be sorry.

I guarantee you'll never be sorry. If you'll spend your life for others. One of the greatest joys in life is laying down your life for somebody else.

Nobody knows it. But those who have done it. But I'm here to tell you.

The honey is sweet. Go and get some. It's sweet.

It's so fulfilling. Just brings to my mind overflow from Africa. If you'll allow me.

I sat with almost every one of the missionaries and just heard their hearts. See where they're at. How they're doing and all that.

I sat with young Joseph Kaufman. He's teaching at Victory Christian School. He's one of the nine school teachers.

And he said these words to me. He said, Brother Denny, I just asked him, how are you doing? Oh, he said, I'm doing wonderful. He said, you know, when I first thought about coming over here to be a school teacher, I thought in my mind, I don't know if I'll like this.

I want to go in the bush. I want to be a village evangelist. I want to do that.

I'm not sure about this school teaching thing. That was his thought. But he felt God leading him that way.

And his authorities also encouraged him to go that way. So he did it. He just did it.

He said, oh, Brother Denny, I have never been so fulfilled in my life. My whole life is wrapped up in these children. They are my ever thought throughout my whole day.

And I'm so fulfilled. My heart just overflows with fulfillment. He's hooked.

He's hooked. He'll never be the same. The crown of the souls of men.

And lastly, but not least, the incorruptible crown. Now this one is in eternity. The incorruptible crown that fadeth not away.

Just a few verses to show you that it's there for the having. James 1 and verse 12 says these words to us. Blessed is the man or woman that endureth temptation.

For when he or she is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him. An eternal crown. An incorruptible crown that fadeth not away.

For who? For those who endure the temptations and the trials of life and do not allow their hearts to be distracted away from their love for God. A crown of life. Paul called it a crown of righteousness.

Let's see how Peter describes it as he's speaking to the elders in 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 4. He said to the elders, and when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Not sure what he means by that, Brother Aaron. Is it a special crown for a shepherd? I don't know.

I think the levels of rewards go up depending on how you serve. Maybe there's a special crown of glory for a shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep for all those years. Nevertheless, it is an incorruptible crown.

And we should read also in 1 Corinthians 9. Paul says these words, and they're good words to all of us. In 1 Corinthians 9, reading from verse 22, to the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.

There's those cells again. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize.

So run that ye may obtain. So run like you are going to win the prize. For every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore, seeing that crown, shall run, not as uncertainly, shall fight I, not as one that beateth the air. Oh no, no way.

I'm not haphazardly swinging my fists in this battle for life. I'm not haphazardly running down the race which God has set before me. No way.

I shall run that I may obtain. Why? Because I've got my sight set on a crown of eternal reward. But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway and not get my crown.

Wouldn't that be sad? How did John say it? Let no man take thy crown. That's what John said. Let no man take thy crown.

Paul said it this way in 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Weight, crown of glory.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen, they are eternal. I wonder where our eyes are this morning.

Paul saw that incorruptible crown and he lived in light of its eternal value every day. He would tell us, every one of us, now that he is on the other side, it's worth it all. You can labor for these things.

You will be well rewarded for every one of them. Paul would tell us. I think of a young man, the testimony of a young man who was heading for the Olympic soccer team.

He had a goal and nothing would stop him from that goal. He had a goal. Do we have a goal? Are we as determined as that young man who was heading for the Olympic soccer team? I mean, when it's all said and done, he's just kicking a ball around the field.

But yet he had a goal. He had a goal. He saw something that he wanted and nothing would get in the way of that which he wanted.

I wonder what our goals are here this morning. I wonder where our focus is. I wonder how we look as we look down the year which is lying ahead of us.

We spent a lot of time through this weekend praying about the year that lies ahead of us. Lord, what do you want us to do? Lead our path. How do you want us to live out this next year? You know, those are good things to fast and pray about.

But I wonder this morning where your goals are set as you look down through the next year of your life. What will we give our lives away for in this next year of our life? A crown is a symbol of public honor, of success and victory, of rewards and blessings. Whether they're corruptible crowns or incorruptible crowns.

I wonder what we're living for today. Someday we are going to receive a crown of righteousness which the Lord will give to all those who love His appearing, to all those that are watching and waiting, to all those that are longing for Jesus to come, to all those who love Him with all their heart. A crown.

A crown of righteousness. And who knows how all that will take place. I don't know.

I don't understand it all. But I know there will be lots of people there. It will be a place of public honor.

But I also know this, brothers and sisters, that when it's all said and done, whether it's one crown or many crowns, we'll take them all and cast them at the feet of Jesus Christ. That's what we'll do. When it's all said and done, though we labored, though we strived, though we fought, though we suffered, though we pressed for the mark, for the prize, though all those things we did and we must do, though we got up early in the morning, though we studied our Bibles, though we labored in the Word, though we lived it out in our lives, though we separated ourselves from other things, that we might intermeddle with all the wisdom that's in the Word of God.

When it's all said and done, we'll cast every one of those crowns at the feet of Jesus Christ and say, worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Worthy is the Lamb. And He'll get His rightful crown as we cast our crowns at His feet.

But dear brothers and sisters, let me remind you, once you finish casting it at His feet, you will also pick it back up and wear it for all of eternity. It'll be worth it all. All the sufferings.

All the trials. It'll be worth it all. Just like the song says, And when the battle's over, we shall wear a crown.

We shall wear a crown. We shall wear a crown. And when the battle's over, we shall wear a crown in the New Jerusalem.

You wanna wear one? It doesn't just drop in on you at the end of your life. Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done in this next year will last.

Only what's done for Christ will last. Let's bow our heads for prayer. Father, we joy before You this morning at the challenge that You've laid before us.

So many rewards, Father, in this life and in the one to come. But God, if only in this life, it's all worth it. Every one of those crowns, Father.

If only in this life. But yet they're also in the one to come. Father, check our priorities, Lord, as we finish these fasting days together.

Check our priorities, Lord. Where we're going. What we're living for.

And guide us, Father, as a church. Lord, You know all the prayers we pray concerning this next year. The work and the labors and what You would have us to do and what we desire, God.

All the tears we've cried, Father, for the things that we want You to do, Lord. Maybe next year, God. Maybe in this year, Father.

Oh, Lord, I pray. Hear our fasting prayers, God. Gather them up in Your vials and dump them out upon this church as we finish charity Christian fellowship, God, in the next year.

In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, brother, for sharing the words with us this morning. Crowns of glory. As I meditated on the message, I was thinking about that challenge of what is my goal for this year? What is my goal for life? I would believe that my goal for life is, yes, souls of men, work of God, eternal things.

But I had to stop and think as I thought about what is my goal for this year? You know, our goals here today has to do with how I'm living today and how that all works out. Is my goal, you know, my job or my business or that raise or... You can put in there whatever you want because we live in this here and now, so we do face our everyday challenges. And so, what is my goal? What am I looking at this year? What about my business? Is that just something I just do that... Yes, we have to pour ourselves into that somewhat, but that can so easily overtake that eternal goal for this year.

Or we have a goal this year of I would like to see, you know, I'd like to lead this many souls to Christ this year. Or I'd like to, you know, read the Bible through this many times this year. I'd like to memorize this many chapters or... What is my goal for this year? What is my goal? Is my goal that closer relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? Or I'm just kind of floating along.

Yes, I have my Christian life, but my goal is my business. You know, we have to face that, don't we? I'm thinking as a man, I don't know what the sister's goals would be, but you just put in there whatever you need to. Let's have our goals set on eternal things.

Not get too caught up with these earthly things. As it says in Colossians chapter 3, If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is in the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. So, I'd like to take a little time to open up here.

If someone has some thoughts about the message, you want to add something or maybe... Also, I thought it would be good if we would give some time to... Allow each one to... The opportunity to share if God has worked in your life this week through the fasting and prayer. If you have a confession to make or need prayer, just open that up. Be mindful of that also.

Is there anyone you'd like to share this morning? Put your hand up here. Put your hand up if you want to share. Well, I just praise God.

He is the rewarder of them that seek Him. It is revealed to me there seem to be different sins just popping up in my life. Fears and taking offense.

And they just seem to be popping up and I wasn't sure why. But through counsel, God just enlightened me that I really believe that the inner core, the real me is ugly and still the old man. And I wasn't believing that I am a new creation.

And I just want to praise God for showing me that. And I just want to be like Mary and just to sit and listen and be loved and just accept His love and His help in the battle ahead. Amen, sister.

God bless you. Amen. It's okay to have some of your sins pop up in front of you when you're fasting and praying.

It's good. It's the way it should be. Things come up that you haven't seen and then you deal with it.

Repent. Confess. Then go on.

That's one of the purposes of fasting and prayer is that cleansing. Allow the Spirit of God to work in your heart and life and allow the Lord to cleanse you and to bring to light those things which are hidden in your

heart. Then you can go on again.

Back here. I just want to say welcome home, Brother Denny and thank you for your work in the Lord. I hope what I'm going to say can somewhat apply to the message today.

It was just kind of brought to my mind as Brother Denny was preaching. Before I knew the Lord, in high school, my twin and I had played basketball. And we were involved in basketball a lot throughout the years.

In our senior year, we had even won districts. Of course, there was a lot of attention to our team. Even today, to walk into the school 18 years later, our trophy is still sitting in the showcase, our picture and everything.

I just think how lost we were back then. Just the attention of man that we wanted and what our goal was. How it means nothing to this day, to the Lord.

It's nothing in the eyes of the Lord right now and I look at my goals right now. I admit, I confess, I struggle so much still with wanting man's attention, wanting people to notice me. I just think, like I said, I think back at the basketball and how it means nothing anymore to me.

How I'm actually embarrassed to even see that picture still sitting up there knowing who I am now. I know the message has certainly enlightened me. When I read the Bible at times, I don't look at verses the way they're explained in our messages and I'm just so grateful that God has given me another vision to be a godly wife and mother.

I know it's my heart's cry that that's what I want to do, but again, when situations come up, my flesh doesn't want that and I'm still very weak in a lot of areas, but I do want to grow and I want to be that old gray-haired woman that is very proud of what I have accomplished as a wife and a mother. Thank you again for that message. Amen.

It was about nine years ago that my sins were washed in the blood of Jesus and I became a Christian. One of the first verses that the Lord showed to me was the crown of the gray head of righteousness. I look back at my life at that time and saw that there was nothing there.

I had been raised on TV and in public schools and I really didn't have anything, although I had a lot of personal accomplishments. I'd been able to do some things and thought I was doing pretty well with the Lord. But He changed my life and when I looked back at my life, it didn't mean anything to me.

But I had a lot of relatives who had gone through old folks' homes and I'd gone to visit them there and the one thing that worried me the most was that when we get old, we revert to what we were as a child. We watch the older folks. As they get older, they become more childlike and I knew that my history had been bad, that I didn't have a really godly upbringing, although I was a pastor's child.

My dad was a Lutheran minister, but Christ was not head of our home. I didn't want that to be my old age and I knew God is faithful and so I poured my life into the Word and the Word comes out a lot more than it did, but I'm like in the process of reprogramming the computer of my mind and I just thank God for what He's done and I just want to bless the Lord for the remembrance that He has given me and the way He's changed my life and changed the direction. When I see gray hairs coming out on my head and I don't have very many, I wish I had more.

I used to color my hair and wish I had none. No gray hairs. But now I see one and it disturbs me if one falls out.

I want more wisdom. I see it as the righteousness of God. I want that.

Every time I see one pop on my head now, that's what I think. This is the righteousness of Christ coming out of my life. This is what I want.

So I just hold on to that and I pray and hope that you will pray with me that I will be faithful all the way through old age if God should allow me to stay for a long time. I don't want to fall in my old age. I've seen it happen to my grandparents.

I don't want to revert back to the filth of the life that I had as a child. I want to always be that child of Christ. I was very challenged with the message, Brother Denny.

Thank you so much for that. Some of the verses that I was thinking about and I've pondered many, many times as I've just been trying to direct the way I'm going, which direction I'm going, what am I going to do with my life, should I invest it in a business, what kind of car should I be driving, all those things I think about. And my heart's desire is one thing as it says in Philippians chapter 2. The Bible gives kind of a, I don't know what you want to call it, but an explanation of some of these men or it gives a background of some of these men like Timotheus, then also some of Paul's chosen people that he was traveling with.

And my heart was always welling up saying, God, you know, that's what I want in my life. And here are a couple of verses that I've really been blessed with. I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state.

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. And then down farther it says, Because for the work of Christ, he, Epaphroditus, was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward me. Then also another verse that has really challenged me is in Acts chapter 15.

Paul and Barnabas, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, after it's all said and done, the things that I throw my life into, what is it going to matter? As I stand before the Lord, what's it really going to matter? I think the only thing that will matter is like Brother Denny was sharing today. The righteous life.

The souls of men. The life we live that was glorifying to the Lord. That's what I desire.

Back here. I just wanted to share with the brotherhood this morning that one of the things God has shown to me this week is just... I believe He's shown it to me before. It's just the fact of authority in my life and the things that... just yielding to that.

And I find myself yielding and repenting and the root just comes back up again. I wonder how it came up so quickly and I yield again and it happens again. I guess I wanted to confess before the brotherhood this morning that that is a very real need in my life that I would yield to authority.

That God would continue to effectively work that root out of me of being yielded and resisting authority. And so I just want to express that to you this morning and want to ask for your prayers that you would pray that God would continue to work with me. That I would be more yielded.

I do praise Him for the work He's already done and I know that I'm a child of His, but I know that there's areas that still need work done. So I just ask for your forgiveness this morning in any way that I may have offended any of you through that root of unyieldedness, whatever it be. And just pray that God would do His work.

Up here. Yeah, thank you brother Denny for the message. I was very challenged and I had to think of a couple of verses I was blessed with this morning in Proverbs.

It's just kind of a road map for what Denny was sharing. I want that crown, but how do I obtain it? Proverbs says, Enter not into the path of the wicked. Go not in the way of evil men.

Avoid it. Pass not by it. Turn from it and pass away.

For they sleep not, except they have done mischief. And their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the vine of violence.

The next verse is what I really loved. I was really blessed with it this morning in my quiet time. But the path of the just is as the shining light that shone us more and more onto the perfect day.

Not only will we receive a crown, but our crown will become brighter and brighter and brighter. Amen. Anybody? Yeah, I know I've used this analogy before at LCM, I don't know if I've used it here.

My mind also went back to my high school days when I was on the swim team. And we would swim 200 laps a day. And my coach would make a sign.

And when we'd go to the end of the lap, he'd show us the sign. It was a four-letter word. And we were already weary and tired.

And the sign said pain. P-A-I-N. Pain.

And I remember that. And it would push me harder to drive myself harder to accomplish our goals. And I know that in, I think about it in the Christian life.

And I have to repent that I have been shying away from that pain. And I know that when I was in LCM, struggling at times there, struggling with some difficulties there, God would just help me, push me along. And I feel like I've been running from some issues in my life, with my family.

And I just want to confess that. I think of my Lord and what He struggled in, what He suffered. Dying on the cross, the pain of the cross.

I think of Paul, I was just reading in here, all that he went through for Christ. That is a part of the Christian life. When witnessing, we should not paint just a rosy picture.

And saying it's all joy. And it is joy. It's wonderful.

The Christian life is the life. It's running the race. It's the narrow way.

It's the way I want to be on. I never want to get off. But there's realities there too.

That there is pain. The pain of fasting. The pain of staying up late at night, crying and weeping over maybe your children or it's a burden on your heart or maybe someone at church.

I just got the burden today. I put it back in my heart and I pray to God I'll just keep it there. We need to see that also as part of the Christian life.

Thank you, Brother John. In the back. Yes, I also want to thank you, Brother Denny, for the message on the striving on in the Christian walk.

Also for making it so clear with our continual maintenance in our Christian walk, it's so important. And the thing you brought out with the Olympic runner, the Olympic person who is striving for that goal. I had to think of a person, that Olympic man, he doesn't only long and strive and work for that goal, but he has to continually work towards that goal that he wants to get.

I mean, if he only looked forward to the hope that someday he might win, someday he might get that medal, get that crown, he'd never get it. But through the summer, through the winter, he has to work for it, he has to strive for it. And sometimes his trainer takes him through things that he doesn't understand.

He doesn't see that they'll ever be effective, but he does what the trainer tells him to do. That's the same way Jesus Christ is to us. He brings us through trials, He brings us through situations and hardships that we might not understand right now.

But at the end, that goal, that gold medal, that crown, the Christian crown will be won. And it's not just by looking forward to it, it's not just by hoping for it, but it's by maintaining our walk in Jesus Christ. Sometimes we might not understand what the fastings are for, what the continual reading are for, and the trials in our lives.

Sometimes we might not understand the situations that are facing us, but our trainer knows. Jesus Christ knows. And if we strive through summer, winter, every season, and train for that, and look forward to it, at the end, we will achieve that crown.

So thank you for the message. Thank you for bringing all that to us. I was so blessed by it.

Thank you. Amen. I was also very blessed, very challenged.

Thank you, Brother Denny. I just praise God for the well-rounded out lesson that we heard this morning of not only evangelism, but also the discipleship to follow it up. That's something God's really been speaking to me.

And I just want to make myself accountable to the church here. That's my goal for this year is deeper walk with the Lord, deeper relationship with Him. And as He accomplishes that in my life, my goal is also horizontally with my wife first of all, and then with my family.

Just that 2005 would be a year that we would become a family that is bound together and that God would draw us to Himself. And I just was really blessed with how Denny just gave us all some more interpretation of the Scripture of how that can be accomplished in each one of our families. I believe we can, at least for me, I can become so caught up in running here and there and telling people about the Lord and that's right and good.

But if I bite more often what I can chew of and have all these half-finished projects around of leading people partially to Christ, only telling them about Christ, but then having myself so overly extended that I don't have any time for discipleship and they fall away from Christ again. And 2 Peter 3 tells us that

oftentimes a person like that is worse than they were in the beginning. Let's just pray that God would give me direction, God would give us all direction, that we make sure that when we go out to tell somebody about the Lord and start a new project like that, that I make sure that I have sufficient to finish and that I have done and that I continue to have enough resources to finish what I have started.

I've seen it in my own life that going out and winning souls for Christ, in a sense, that's the easy part. But the discipleship that it really takes to walk alongside someone and discipleship them to also be soul winners, that's the thing that takes time. And it's so tempting to just kind of drop that and run and just like Brother Jeff shared, paint a rosy picture.

But I believe that, as Denny shared this morning, that if that's all I'm after, yes, I may have told a lot of people about Christ. It may have appeared that I won a lot of people to Christ. But how does Christ really see that? Does He see that kind of half-finished work as more than just hysterical activity? And will there be a crown for me at the end of life if I don't have a well-rounded out vision of what Christ has for us as far as from a discipleship evangelism standpoint rather than just evangelism alone.

So I just pray that God would continue to show me a clearer path of that, that I would be making the investments, the eternal investments, first of all, in my family and then the outflow of that as well in the people that I get in contact with. God bless you all. God bless the whole church family here of just being a support to us all.

And we want to be a blessing to you as well. Amen. Thank you for sharing that.

Thank God for His Word this morning. Isn't it a blessing, encouragement to our hearts? Thank you, Brother Denny, for laboring in the Word. As I was just listening to the Word and the Lord was laying some things on my heart and I felt I'd just like to share this with you young people today who have not gotten the opportunity to go to Africa.

What about you? You know, I certainly don't want to diminish from what Denny said. It is a very rich experience for all those who get to go. But some of you haven't gotten to go as of yet.

But I just want to encourage you this morning that God has souls for you to win here too. And God can bring you through to a deeper walk of discipleship and blessing and reward as you set your heart to serve the Lord. And so I just want to encourage you in that.

Don't despair thinking, well, I haven't been asked to go to Africa. I'm already 22. What about me? Oh, my dear young people.

The Lord has a rich reward and crown for you too. And I just want to encourage you in that. And I know that's Brother Denny's heart too.

So this morning I also thought of you sisters. I thought of our wives. I thought of my mother who's gone to be with the Lord.

You know, that's a hidden life many times. But how many people's testimony as you hear them share, maybe the evangelist thinks he's the one who gets the crown because he led him to the Lord. But what about Mama who's been praying faithfully for many, many years? And so I just want to encourage you mothers this morning.

You know, maybe it's a hidden work nobody really sees, but God sees and God knows. And you may not be out there winning souls, but what about your precious little ones and your children, your family? So I just want to encourage you to be faithful in the calling where God has placed you. And you also shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

And I want to bless my wife today for her prayers for me and for our family. And I also give thanks to God for my mother. I know she prayed much for me.

So I thank the Lord for the message today. It's encouragement to my own heart. Thank you, Brother Denny.

Thank you, Aaron, for those timely words there. I also was thinking of those who do not have the opportunity to go, haven't been asked to go. So I want to encourage you young sisters who are serving here, maybe you're sweeping floors and washing diapers and all those things.

What does God require from you? He requires faithfulness. He requires that you be faithful in that which He has called you to do today. And that you would be able to pour your life out into that which He has called you to do today.

And be faithful in it. I don't think the glory of the crown will be much different if you are faithful in those things. God bless you, sisters, who are doing that in our congregation here.

I just want to thank the Lord for showing me through that message just a little more light on something. He's been dealing with me for the last several months. I was also thinking, I wonder if some of those gold crowns might not be kind of heavy.

It's been something that's been heavy on my heart. I don't even think I'm involved in it so much for attention. But it's just something I spend a lot of time on and that's something Danny talked about, food preparation.

And I'm just feeling like I just spend too much time on it, thinking about it, whatever. And so far I haven't seen my way to the end of how to deal with it. But I'm just trusting that God will be faithful to show me.

Thank you. God bless you, sister. I've learned that when the Spirit of God is speaking to me about a certain area, then He's wanting to deal with it.

And I have faith that when He does that, then I know He'll bring me through if I yield to Him. So God bless you as you find your way, man. All right.

Thank you all for sharing and opening up your hearts and testifying.

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