

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Meaning Of The Crown

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James writes, “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love Him*” (James 1:12). If you have ever received an award, has not the meaning of the award transcended the actual prize? It is more than the glittering trophy in hand or the sight of the dollar amount of the check, but all that is associated with and has led up to the prize contribute to give meaning to the joyous moment.

The ultimate prize for every faithful Christian is the “*crown of life*”. The crown is designating victory over death. Such thought transcends the crown itself. The Christians in Smyrna found comfort in being faithful unto death, for such dedication would be rewarded with the crown of life. Those faithful even in the face of death could find strength in the knowledge that they would not be hurt by the “*second death*.” - eternal separation from God. Instead, they would receive the crown of “*life*” - eternal union with God (Revelation 2:10-11).

James reminds us of what must occur before the promise of the crown of life is received. First, the crown of life will be the culmination of an approval process. The approval is not in the number of people who praised us throughout life, but how we handled the temptations that came our way in life. Were we faithful in finding the way of escape when the temptation to sin enticed us (I Corinthians 10:13)? Did we face the trials of persecution with faithfulness, never forsaking the Lord? In the end, the only approval that matters is that of the Lord (cf. I Corinthians 4:3-5). Those who endure and do not fall away are the approved ones before God. The crown will mean we endured, and such faithfulness found approval from God.

Being given the crown of life will mean that what we always knew about true love will be vindicated. We always knew that love for God was manifested in our “*obeying*” the Lord’s commands and “*keeping*” His word (John 14:15, I John 2:5). Living in a time when love was defined by many in the terms of emotional feelings instead of actually keeping the Word, the received crown

will mean that love was always determined by more than words. As James reminds us, those who have endured are not only the ones who are approved of God, but they are also the ones who truly “*love Him*”.

The crown will also carry the meaning of righteousness to the recipient. Paul said that all those who, like him, love the Lord’s appearing and prepared for it by keeping the faith and finishing the race will receive the “*crown of righteousness*” from the “*righteous judge*” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). The recipient of the crown will rejoice that he or she made the decision to come to Christ in faith through obedience of the gospel (Philippians 3:9, Romans 1:16-17).

The “*crown of glory*” means the glory will never lessen, for it “*fadeth not away*” (I Peter 5:4). The crown God offers is “*incorruptible*” in nature (I Corinthians 9:25). May we endure temptation, finding approval from God, for receiving the crown of life from the Lord will mean such living manifested a true love for God.