

THE CROWN OF LIFE

By: Ray Varner, Member, Church of Christ at North Cobb, Kennesaw, GA

As we look at the crown of life, first of all, we see that it is incorruptible. That is to say that it cannot be destroyed. Matthew 6:19 says: *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steel.”*

Even the heavy crowns of Gold and jewels worn by the monarchs will someday be destroyed by thieves, the ravages of time or by the end of time, but our crown is indestructible. In ancient times the winners of athletic competitions were awarded a crown of laurel leaves (which gave rise to the expression “resting on your laurels”). This was obviously a very temporary and fleeting reward and it is that to which the crown of life is contrasted in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25: *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And 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.”*

Notice that God expects us to run the race to win and we are expected to condition ourselves to run in that race by being temperate in all things. Just as an athlete cannot indulge in the physical excess of life if he expects to be competitive, the Christian must avoid the sins that turn us away from the course we must run.

Second, our crown is one of Joy and rejoicing. *“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?”* (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

What greater comfort and joy can there be in this life than to be assured of receiving the laurels of victory from the hands of our Savior when our race on this earth is done? *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:13).

Third, and again in comparison to a race, it is a prize for those who reach for the goal set by the savior. *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:13-14).

Lastly in Revelation 22:14, the crown of life is equated to the tree of life and our reward: *“Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”*

As we gather each Sunday to abide in His commands to worship in song, prayer, communion, teaching, and giving, I know we are uplifted and strengthened by joining together in His presence. And that it is just another step in the race toward receiving the crown of our high calling.