

FEAST OF TABERNACLES 2023 — DAY 5

HOLD FAST TO YOUR CROWN

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There is an old Negro spiritual song: “As I went down in the river to pray”. One of the verses: “... **studying about the good old way and who shall wear the starry crown.**”

I suppose if you were a slave ... **you might well look forward to the future life when you might wear a starry crown? The reward that they will get when they meet Jesus.**

Well — **scripture** doesn't offer us a starry crown — but it certainly **offers us a crown — a Crown of Victory** — and that's something we should look forward to — and take care to protect.

Today ... I want to look at what the Bible says about our crowns ... and ... the personal warning that Jesus gives to us.

James 1:9-12

9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,
10 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.

11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. *(The temporary nature of our physical lives — pilgrims — tabernacling in this physical body)*

12 **Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of (the) life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.** *(The Greek says: “the crown of the life”)*

One of the qualities of our crown is that it signifies we will live forever ... the crown of Eternal Life.

Revelation 2:8, 10-11

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of (the) life.**

11 “He who has an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.** He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

This is addressed “to Smyrna” — and **to all who overcome** ... in all of the Church ages.

The Apostle Paul was willing to put out some **real effort to obtain and protect his crown.**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

24 **Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.** (*“May obtain it” — or — “win it”*)

25 And **everyone** who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. *(Exercise self control)* Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, **but we (believers) for an imperishable crown.**

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. *(Not shadow boxing)*

27 But **I discipline my body and bring it into subjection**, lest, when I have preached to others, **I myself should become disqualified.** *(He masters himself!! He’s competing! He’s got his eyes on the goal)*

Our objective is for an imperishable crown (or “a crown that will last forever”).

Paul recognised he was in a race. **A marathon — run over many decades.** He ran — he fought. **He wants the prize! — THE CROWN OF LIFE! This is a race that we run. Finish the race — don’t give up!**

We can see Paul’s attitude further in:

Philippians 3:11-14

11 if, by any means, **I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.**

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but **I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.**

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and **reaching forward to those things which are ahead,**

14 **I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Philippians 3:14 (THE VOICE)

14 **I am sprinting toward the only goal that counts: to cross the line, to win the prize,**

Reaching forward ... pressing toward the prize ... it's worth all of the effort! That imperishable Crown of Life.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 **Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**

3 For **the time will come when they (the Church members) will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears,** they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and **they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

5 But **you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Finally ... the Lord will give me the Crown of Righteousness ... AND ALSO TO ALL THE BELIEVERS.

That's you and me! **If we finish the race.**

1 Peter 5:1-4

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, **not for dishonest gain (money)** but eagerly;

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

You (elders in context ... but all believers too) ... will receive the Crown of Glory ... which never fades.

The Greek word for “crown” in these passages is Stephanos.

Originally it was used of a wreath or garland placed on the head of the victor in the public games ... as a symbol of the honour due to the victor ... the winner. Over time it became more elaborate — making them out of gold ... silver ... jewels.

Eventually it came to be associated with a person of special status or honour — such as a reigning sovereign.

But its primary meaning was applied to the victor in a contest. We can see that in Paul's references to striving for the prize in a race or fight.

Both meanings can be applied to us ... IF we finish the race ... we obtain the prize — a crown (stephanos) of victory — and

we get to reign with Jesus as kings and priests unto our God. **But the primary meaning of our crown is that we are victors.**

What might our crown be made of? We know it's a Crown of Life ... of Glory ... of Righteousness ... that's imperishable ... but what might it look like?

Not explicitly stated ... but there is a strong hint in:

Revelation 4:2-4

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

4 **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.**

Crowns of "gold". Not physical gold ... but some spiritual equivalent with the appearance of gold. Are our crowns are likely to be similar?

Revelation 14:14

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, **and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown,** and in His hand a sharp sickle.

Jesus has a "golden" crown ... so both Jesus and the 24 Elders have golden crowns. A good chance that our crowns will have the appearance of gold too!

So far ... so good. **But then comes a personal warning about our crowns! Don't be too casual.**

Revelation 3:7-11,13

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

8 “I know your works. See, **I have set before you an open door**, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. *(I think that this is the open door at the 6th Seal when Jesus takes His saints into Heaven)*

9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

10 **Because you have kept My command to persevere**, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

11 **Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.** *(A better translation: “hold fast what you have that no one receive your crown”)*

13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” *(all believers are offered crowns ... all have to be careful not to lose them)*

Whoops! Someone could take our crown? We could lose out ...?

“Hold fast” from the Greek to exercise power (used of Herod when he “laid hold” of John Baptist). **This is Jesus’ instruction to us — keep a tight grip! Be vigilant!** The Apostle Paul kept himself under ... exerted self-discipline ... lest he lose out.

We need to be vigilant about our calling. It’s a Pearl of Great Price.

Hebrews 2:1-3

1 **Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.**

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,

3 **how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation**, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

Two strong warnings!

Even so ... **it is possible that someone could come along and take our crown from us?**

No. The Greek word there for “take” is “LAMBANO”. It occurs around 260 times in the New Testament. **Just over 50% of the time ... it’s translated as “receive” ... not “take”.**

Nobody can steal our crown. But through neglect ... not holding fast ... not overcoming ... we can lose our crown. God will then take it — and give it to someone else. **So a better translation of Revelation 3:11 is “hold fast what you have that no one receive your crown”.**

If we don’t value our crown ... God will give the opportunity to someone else. So they receive the crown that was originally designated for us. We didn’t safeguard our crown. **Ultimately ... that’s our responsibility.**

Back to Revelation 3.

Revelation 3:11-13

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! **Hold fast what you have, that no one may RECEIVE your crown.**

12 **He who overcomes**, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

13 **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** ’

Revelation 3:5-6

5 **He who overcomes** shall be clothed in white garments, **and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life**; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. **(his crown is secure)**

6 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

“He who overcomes” is said to all of the 7 churches. The Greek word for “overcomes” is Nikaos — it means one who “conquers or carries off the victory”

Revelation 3:5 (NIV)

5 **The one who is victorious** ...

Revelation 3:5 (NET)

5 **The one who conquers** ...

The sports brand “Nike” comes from the name of the Greek goddess — “Nike” ... the goddess of victory.

Jesus says to all of us that **we must be victors** ... **must be conquerors** ... **must emerge victorious** if we are to receive the rewards — which includes our crown.

Remember: Stephanos/crown was originally the wreath or garland placed on the head of the victor. It's those who overcome — or are victors — who will wear the crown.

If we're uncaring ... negligent ... choked by the cares and distractions of this life ... we might be in trouble.

Jesus will certainly do His part! Nobody is going to steal our crown ... but **it is up to us to stick close to God and walk with Him.**

Romans 8:31

31 What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** (*We are not on our own*)

That's a great thought. **He is endeavouring to make sure we are victors.**

Romans 8:35-39

35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (*The answer is nobody ... only ourselves. We can become so casual. No one can take us from God's care*)

36 As it is written:

“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

37 Yet **in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.** (*The Greek is: Hupernikao. Huper = exceedingly ... abundantly*)

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,
39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**NOTHING CAN COME BETWEEN US AND THE LORD JESUS.
NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US! We are more than conquerors!**

The Greek is: Hupernikao. Huper = exceedingly ... abundantly.

Romans 8:37 (NASB)

37 But **in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.**

Romans 8:37 (NET)

37 No, **in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us!**

Romans 8:37 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

37 No, **in all these things we are superconquerors, through the one who has loved us.**

So **Jesus helps us to be super-overcomers** ... provided we abide in Him.

1 John 5:1-5

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.** And His commandments are not burdensome. (*This is how you show your love for God*)

4 **For whatever is begotten of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.**

5 Who is **he who overcomes the world**, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

“Overcomes” = Nikaos (used 3 times)

“Victory” = Nike

Our faith ... believing in our Lord and Saviour ... allows us to overcome the world (Kosmos ☺).

If we continue to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God ... trust in ... we can overcome and conquer — enjoy being super-conquerors ... super-victors.

And ... **as victors** (if we overcome the world) ... **we receive the prize of victory — the Crown of Glory ... the Crown of Life.**

No one can steal it forcibly from us. But we need to ensure we value it ... and hold fast — so that our crown is not given to another.

Then one day we can look forward to reigning with the Lord Jesus ... as a King and Priest ... wearing our golden crowns!