

Crowns

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking to please God and to bring glory to Him through diligence and striving lawfully, and that the crowns we earn will be incorruptible and abiding.

Scripture: John 16:13, John 18:37, 2 Corinthians 5:6, Philippians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 2 Timothy 4:8, 1 Peter 5:4, Revelation 2:10, Revelation 19:12

Topics: "Eternal Rewards", "Christ's Suffering"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the various crowns mentioned in the Bible, symbolizing different aspects of faith and rewards in Christ. The Holy Spirit guides believers towards heavenly wisdom, encouraging them to press forward towards the incorruptible crowns that await them in the presence of the glorified Lord. The significance of Christ's crown of thorns is highlighted, emphasizing the inseparable connection between His sufferings and our redemption. The sermon delves into the hereditary and won crowns, illustrating how believers share in Christ's glory and are promised crowns of life, glory, righteousness, and rejoicing.

Transcript

Perfect is the grace and divine is the skill with which the Holy Spirit seeks to quicken the footsteps of those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. With heavenly wisdom He speaks of the crowns that await them, and cheers them onward and upward to where their Lord is already glorified, where crowns that never fade are reserved. He shows them to faith beforehand. The unnamed servant, honoured by Abraham with the mission of bringing Rebekah to his son Isaac, "brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment" for the damsel (Gen. 24). He was blessed with success through the goodness of God, presenting a striking type of the present errand of the One who is here to lead us homeward to the Son of the Father's love. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself . . . He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14).

The steps of the Apostle Paul hastened as he looked forward to the glory where the Son of God, who had loved him and given Himself for him, had gone; and he pressed forward as he saw the day when He should publicly reign and rule over all. Thoughts of distinctions in the present age detained him not. The best honours it could offer were not of abiding value in his eyes; its crown was a fading one to him. Yea, it was "corruptible," he said, when contrasting the world's prize with the believer's. Thus he wrote, "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." The reward of this age fades and perishes; like the leafy crown of the honoured Grecian athlete, it is corruptible; but, that, which those who are speeding on to where Christ is shall receive shines in its untarnished brilliance and beauty for ever--it is incorruptible.

Four times in the Gospels mention is made of another crown. It was the crown worn by our Lord Jesus Christ--THE CROWN OF THORNS. How intensely significant! In a book which speaks so often of crowns this is the only one mentioned in the four Gospels.

Does it not remind us, there could be no glory for us apart from the sufferings of Christ? "No cross, no crown" is true in a deeper sense than is often meant. He endured the cross. He bore our sins and the judgment which we deserved when hanging on the tree. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He glorified God about the whole question of sin and sins there; and now, on the throne at God's right hand, He is worthily crowned with glory and honour. Faith sees that crown of splendour upon His brow. In Him we have redemption through His blood; and there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus; nothing can separate them from the love of God which is in Him; and the place which is His in the favour and glory of God is theirs also. The right understanding of this will not lead to laxity, or to being "at ease in Zion"; but rather to spiritual energy, as the apostle said, "We are always confident . . . wherefore we labour" (2 Cor. 5:6, 9). In every way, as he hastens onward, the true soul seeks to be agreeable to the One who suffered for him, who wore the crown of thorns, but who now wears the crown of glory and honour.

There are crowns which are hereditary, and there are crowns that have been won. Our Lord Jesus Christ is rightly entitled to both. The state crown of Russia shows, in the place of the most valuable jewel which sparkled brightest amidst its numerous clusters, a small plate of gold inscribed with the name "Katusoff." Katusoff had served his country so well, the Czar sent him the gem from the state crown, and elevated him to be prince of Smolensk; as much as to say, He is the most brilliant jewel of the nation and has brought honour to its crown. Christ brings to the hereditary crowns (not only David's, but that which is His as "the King eternal") fresh glory through the work of redemption. For He who is God, becoming man--the Son of man, glorified God; and though God has glorified Him in Himself, it shall ever be remembered amidst the everlasting rejoicings that God was glorified in Him, in the Son of man. What an answer of divine righteousness to the mockings of men, when He wore the crown of thorns! In a certain sense that was rightly fallen man's hereditary crown, for thorns grew up as a result of man's sin, they were part of the curse, but not His to whom they gave it, for He was sinless. "Thou art then a King," said Pilate. Jesus replied, "Thou sayest that I am a King. I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:37). And Pilate went out again to the Jews, saying to them, Lo, I bring Him out to you, that ye may know that I find in Him no fault whatever. Jesus therefore went forth without, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and Pilate said, Behold the Man! We have a law, said the Jews, and according to it He ought to die, because He made Himself Son of God. This raised a much deeper question. Pilate had felt himself in the presence of someone who was far above any others he had to do with. He had faced the question of His Kingship, and apparently admitted it; but was He indeed Son of God? Whence art Thou? Pilate asked. From the moment he received the answer he sought to release Him! He seemed to know that the crown of David was rightly His, but "he was the more afraid" when He heard of His claim to divine glory. Nevertheless, he fell beneath the popular clamour for His crucifixion, when the chief priests said, We have no King but Caesar. Many were "astonished" at Jesus then in His humiliation, as Isaiah foretold (52:14); but looking on to His coming again in glory and power, he added, "So shall He astonish many nations; the

kings shall shut their mouths at Him." Not earth's crown of thorns shall pierce His holy brow then, but the brightest diadems in the universe shall be honoured to shine there. Every eye shall see Him, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending. What a sight!

Nor will He be alone in His glory. Those who are spoken of as His co-heirs will be with Him. They were once lost and guilty sinners; heirs of wrath by nature, even as others; but they were born again, converted to God; and as His children received the Spirit; "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," whose love they have known. In this way, they also wear an hereditary crown. It is called "THE CROWN OF LIFE." James speaks of it as that which is promised to all that love Him (1:12). All who are born of God do this, therefore it is hereditary, not through our first birth, but the second. In Revelation 2:10 (during the days of martyrdom for Christ) the First and the Last, who Himself became dead and lived, spoke of that crown to encourage those who suffered; saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of life." He gives it to them Himself.

At the present time we may hear little of such extreme suffering for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet we are urged on to diligently care for His interests, for we are told in 1 Peter 5:4, "THE CROWN OF GLORY" awaits those who do so. Shepherding the flock of God with ready and willing service, not in a lordly way as is so popular in Christendom, but as examples to our brethren in Christ; then, Peter says, "When the chief Shepherd is manifested ye shall receive the unfading crown of glory." We have spoken of that time of manifestation, of His appearing when every eye shall see Him, and we are told also that all those who love His appearing shall receive "THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS." It is the Apostle Paul who mentions this crown, even as he named the first we spoke of, the incorruptible crown. James and John speak of the crown of life. Peter wrote of the third--the crown of glory. There are seven in all pertaining to the saints of God as we shall see. Paul, at the close of his course of service for Christ, looked forward with happy confidence to receiving from "the Lord, the righteous Judge," the crown of righteousness. His time to be released from this world had come. The good fight he had fought successfully till the end! The race upon which he so earnestly entered he had run to the close, and the faith which meant so much to him he had kept to the finish! Now he looks away to that day when he shall receive from His well-loved Lord the crown which shall be rendered, he tells Timothy, "Not only to me, but also to all who love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

The fifth crown is mentioned by John in Revelation 3:11. The sixth and seventh by Paul in Philippians 4:1, and 1 Thessalonians 2:19. It is not easy to describe the fifth; and yet, we see its importance in the words, "I come quickly"--"hold fast"--"that no man take thy crown." These words are addressed to those who bear the marks of Philadelphia; not to the overcomers. They are specially spoken to in the next verse. Therefore, with this qualification, we will abide by the word of the Spirit, who names it thus, "THY CROWN." Is it yours? Is it mine? It is if we have the characteristics described in the earlier verses. The fact is, there is need of a great awakening. A man is not likely to hold this precious crown if he sleeps. The Lord says, Hold fast! How can I do this if I am asleep? He says also, I come quickly! Is our path ordered in view of that moment? Is our service for the Lord ordered according to the revealed will of God? or is it governed by the mind of man? We are told, a man is "not crowned unless he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). God is not behind man. He has His own order for His work, and this He approves in those who conform to it. May we all have grace to see to our present ways in view of the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is something exceedingly beautiful in the crown spoken of in Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." What wealth of love and joy, and hope sparkle in jasper, sapphire and emerald splendour here. These

precious saints at Philippi, where he first preached the glad tidings in Europe, Paul speaks of as his joy and crown. We may call it THE APOSTLE'S CROWN. Not as excluding others entirely, for surely there are many who have been used in blessing to others, for whom they have in their measure the same Spirit-begotten desires. Such are their crown also. The seventh is very akin to this. It is called THE "CROWN OF REJOICING" (1 Thess. 2:19). The apostle looks forward again to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to those Thessalonians, who had been converted through his preaching, being then before Him in His glory. They were His glory and joy now, and His crown then, in which He could rejoice or boast, for that is the sense of it. We may well ask ourselves, Can we look forward to the coming of Christ with similar gladness, in regard to any whose conversion we have been used to, being before Him in that day? If so, thanks be to God; and may their number be speedily increased for the glory of Him who redeemed us by His blood.

In all the Scriptures we have spoken of the ordinary word for crown is used--it is *stephanos*. There is, however, another word--*Diadema*--used three times only by the Spirit (Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 19:12). It was originally confined to designate true royalty and kingship; whereas, the other word often had a wider use. It is a very serious thought, that great dignity, whom even the archangel did not dare to bring a railing judgment against, in regard to a certain dispute, is spoken of in the first of these Scriptures as having seven diadems. When cast out of the heaven, he gives his authority, his throne and his power to the beast, the world's imperial head at that time, after the assembly is glorified with Christ. This power is said to have ten diadems. Both of them--Satan and the Gentile head--had originally genuine authority; but so far have they fallen, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one will be cast into the abyss (Rev. 20:2), and the other into the lake of fire, along with the false prophet who collaborated with him.

As far as they are concerned, their diadems will be lost for ever, and the One whom they opposed and blasphemed shines forth in His longed-for glory--longed for by multitudes of the redeemed--and upon His head are seen "many diadems." No number is given. The diadems are many. This is the last mention of crowns or diadems in the Bible. They rest eternally upon the brow of Him who alone is worthy to wear them for the eternal glory of God. The heart of the saint says, Amen; and he delights to sing, "Jesus, Thou alone art worthy."

This is true, but we must remember that He desires for us an abundant entrance into His glory. He would have us diligent in regard to the crowns we have spoken of. Might that not make us selfish? asks someone. How can it be selfish to seek to please Him? Moreover, we are told that the saints around the throne of glory not only wear upon their heads "golden crowns" (Rev. 4:4), but also that they worship Him and cast their crowns before the throne (Rev. 4:10). And then, how they will rejoice that they have them to cast at His feet. Moreover, they have harps also (Rev. 5:8), to make the music of redemption ring out the worthiness of the One who shed His precious blood, as they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy! Thou hast redeemed to God by Thy blood! and made them kings and priests to our God; and they shall reign over the earth.

Until that time our path is onward and upward to where He is gone before; and we do well to remember that the crowns of this age are "corruptible," and that ours are "incorruptible." Even the wearers of imperial diadems apart from Christ will lose them. The unfading and abiding belong to Christ and those who are His. May we be wholehearted when we serve Him and sing praise to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us; to Him who wore the crown of thorns, but now is crowned with glory and honour at God's right hand; looking forward to the glad day which is nearer now than ever it was, when--Himself our hopes shall crown.

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