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FANCY WEARING A CROWN?

Christians often wonder what Heaven will be like. Amongst other descriptions in Scripture, we read that the *'street of the city was pure gold'* (Revelation 21:21), but is this literal or metaphoric? Might it be that it is simply indescribably beautiful and glorious?

There are several occasions when the Bible states that we will receive crowns. That sounds fantastic, but I wonder how practicable it would be to wear them all together, or perhaps the plan could be to wear a different one each day! Are these literal crowns or representing something else?

We tend to think of crowns as something belonging to royalty (1 Peter 2:9), but the NT sees our crowns as a prize or reward, like a wreath awarded to a winning athlete in a race. Interestingly, the original Greek word translated *'crown'* is *'stephanos'*, derived from the name *'Stephen'*, the martyr.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 The Imperishable Crown

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath *, but we an imperishable. (* translated 'crown' in NIV/KJAV)*



The Imperishable Crown

Corinthians 9:24-25

With the Olympic and Paralympic Games fresh on our minds, we're reminded that in the Ancient Games the victor received a wreath of honour, but it was perishable. Everything of this life perishes, but investment in God's kingdom lasts forever. Every good deed, every word of spiritual encouragement and witness will be rewarded. Jesus: *'when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you... lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matthew 6:3-4,20-21).

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 The Crown of Boasting

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. (* translated as 'glory' in NIV, 'rejoicing' in KJAV)*



**The Crown
of Boasting**

1 Thessalonians 2:19

We probably feel that boasting may not be the most appropriate emotion for us (Galatians 6:14), yet what joy there will be when, having invested in other people's lives, they stand alongside us in the Lord's presence. One treasured moment was sharing my testimony as a young teenager in a meeting – oh, how feeble and faltering I was – but two girls made commitments of faith afterwards! To God be the glory!

2 Timothy 4:7-8 The Crown of Righteousness

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.



**The Crown
of Righteousness**

2 Timothy 4:7-8

The Christian life is both a race and a 'GOOD fight'. Tim Shenton's recent Sunday evenings series on the Christian's Armour (Ephesians 6) reminded us that in our spiritual warfare we must put on the full armour of God. In the Bible many of God's servants ran well throughout their lives, but some badly failed in later life, e.g. Solomon. Let's aim to finish our race well.

Note: mention of '*the faith*' Our faith is not manmade philosophy or religion; but in the living, invisible, immortal, eternal, creator, God-only- wise, Saviour and Lord.

1 Peter 5:4 The Crown of Glory

And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.



**The Crown
of Glory**

1 Peter 5:4

What an encouragement for our pastors and elders! They work so hard and faithfully amongst us, the sheep of His pasture. Sometimes ministry is tough, challenging, without due appreciation. Our chief Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep; He feeds, guides and protects us, (Psalm 23, John 10). The 'under-shepherds' who serve Him and us will be gloriously rewarded in the Day of Christ. But that doesn't stop us saying 'thank you' to them now!

Revelation 2:10

The Crown of Life

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

(NIV: Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.)



The Crown of Life

Revelation 2:10

The letter to the church at Smyrna makes no mention of any spiritual shortcomings, rather that the Lord knew of all their tribulations and poverty. Some would be imprisoned for their faith and some martyred. Under such enormous pressure the Lord's comforting words were that their period of tribulation was time-limited (figuratively 'ten days'), but eternal life would be their crown.

Our sufferings in Christ's name are not in the same league, but whatever we lose in this life will more than be rewarded in the next.

So, what will we do with all these crowns? Here's a great idea – let's be like the elders who were wearing golden crowns around the Lord's throne! *'They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."* (Revelation 4:9-11).

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