

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul has been sitting on death row in a Roman prison because of his Christian faith.

Paul compares his time on earth as a Christian ambassador (2 Cor.5:20-21) as “fighting the good fight and finishing the course and keeping the faith” (2 Tim.4:7).

By chapter four of 2 Timothy, Paul’s sentence of death (2 Cor.1:9) has become sentenced to death (2 Tim.4:6).

Now Paul turned his attention towards his future and heavenly citizenship:

(Phil.3:20-21) “In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on “that day” (the Judgment Seat of Christ) (2 Cor.5:10); and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Tim.4:8)

This lesson will study four aspects of the Crown of Righteousness that will be awarded certain church age believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSC).

1. Church age crowns are based on the crown of thorns (stephanos akanthios) worn by Jesus Christ on the cross (John 19:1-5).

His crown of thorns represented the curse of Adam’s Original Sin (AOS) which He bore on His body.

“And he Himself bore our sins in His on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” (1 Pet.2:24; Gen.2:17; 3:6-7; 3:17-19; Rom.5:12-21).

The **crown of thorns** was His reflected glory of distinguished divine service in the angelic conflict (A/C).

“But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.” (Heb.2:9)

He wore the crown of thorns in time so that we might wear the crown of +R in eternity (2 Cor.5:21).

He will wear the King’s crown (diadema) in eternity (Rev.19:12, 16).

2. There will be four categories of church age crowns awarded to certain believers for distinguished divine service for Christ in the devil’s world (2 Cor.4:4).

They are won in phase II (believer in time) and worn in phase III (believer in eternity)

“**Do you not know** that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives **the prize** (brabeion)? **Run in such a way** that you may **win** (katalambano) [attain or obtain]. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable **wreath** (stephanos), but we an imperishable (aphartos).” (1 Cor.9:24-25)

The four categories of church age crowns are:

- **Life** (James 1:12; Rev.2:10) – persevering under undeserved suffering for Christ.
- **Glory** (1 Pet.5:1-4) – shepherding the flock of God with the word of God and love of Christ.
- **Boasting** (1 Thess.2:19-20; Phil.4:1; 1 Cor.9:14-18; Luke 15:7, 10) – effective service as an ambassador of the gospel of Christ.
- **Righteousness** (2 Tim.4:6-8) – reaching and maintaining spiritual maturity through dying grace for Christ.

3. Each church age crown has its own set of rules in its own category.

The believer must play by these rules in order to win – “And also if **anyone competes** as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to **the rules.**” (2 Tim.2:5)

“And **everyone who competes** in the games **exercises self-control** in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath (crown), but we an imperishable.” (1 Cor.9:25)

How we run will determine whether we win or lose the crown. We could lose winning the crown by not running (**1 Cor.9:24**) or by not finishing the course (**2 Tim.4:8**) or by not competing by the rules (**2 Tim.2:5**) or by not exercising self-control regarding the contest (**1 Cor.9:25**) or by not running with aim (**1 Cor.9:26**) or by falling down and not getting back up and finishing the race (**Heb.12:2; Gal.5:7**).

“I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.” (Rev.3:11)

4. The crown of righteousness (dikaiosune) is awarded to the church age believer who reaches and maintains spiritual growth maturity through dying grace (2 Tim.4:6-8).

Dikaiosune is a Pauline theology word. The Greek suffice (sune) refers to quality or character of what is right and just based on the righteousness of God (dikaios).

The sinless humanity of Jesus Christ satisfied the justice of God regarding the 13 judicial charges of AOS by His spiritual death on the cross and acquired the imputation of God's +R to everyone who believes the gospel of grace salvation (1 Cor.15:3-4; Rom.1:16; Eph.2:8-9; 2 Cor.5:21).

The righteousness of God (+R) is important in all three phases of the plan of God (Rom.3:22-25; 2 Cor.5:21; Phil.3:9).

- **Phase I is positional +R** based on the imputation of God's righteousness by the gospel of Jesus Christ.” But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor.1:30)
- **Phase II is experiential +R** based on walking by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal.5:16-17; Rom.8:4; 1 Cor.6:19-20) and walking by means of faith cycle (2 Cor.5:7; 2 Tim.3:16). “Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” (2 Tim.2:22)
- **Phase III is ultimate +R** based on the believer operating from his resurrection body in eternity. In phase III, the CA believer will wear the crowns that he won in phase II by distinguished divine service in devil's world (2 Tim.4:6-8).

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