

OF CROSSES AND CROWNS

Scripture:

Matthew 19:25-30 “When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*”²⁷ Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “*Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*”²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Introduction:

When we serve God and live according to His Word, we have rewards promised to us. Yet these promises do not come without trial, struggle and sometimes hardship. Most of us want the rewards, but are unwilling to pay the price of discipleship. These are the days when God is raising up a generation of Sons of God who are willing to be His disciples and abide by whatever discipleship means for them. A disciple is one who has a disciplined life.

I. Crosses come before the crowns.

- A. All those live godly lives will be persecuted in some way or another.
II Timothy 3:12 “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”
- B. The world’s attitude toward Christians has never changed.
I John 3:11-13 “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,¹² not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.”
1. Evil will always be at odds with righteousness.
 2. Because the world will work against us, we need to draw together as brothers and sisters.
 3. If men love darkness because their deeds are evil, then they will hate the light.
 4. If we are the light of the world then the darker their deeds are the more they will hate and persecute the believer.
- C. Paul lived a Godly life and suffered as a consequence.
II Corinthians 11:23-27 “Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;²⁶ in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”
1. He worked harder than the average person.
 2. He had been beaten for his faith.
 3. He had been imprisoned.
 4. He had walked through the valley of the shadow of death.
 5. Beaten with rods, shipwrecked, and traveled more than his flesh might have wanted to, in all kinds of perilous situations.

6. Sometimes just tired, sleepy, cold and hungry.
- D. Jesus' words to the wise.
Mark 8:34-36 *"When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

II. Overcomers can expect crowns to be given to them.

- A. If we run with the race with patience, we gain an enduring crown that will not perish.
I Corinthians 9:25 *"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown."*
- B. If we keep the faith, we are promised a crown of righteousness.
II Timothy 4:8 *"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."*
- C. For those who endure temptation, a crown of life is promised.
James 1:12 *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."*
- D. Those who minister in leadership responsibly will receive a crown of glory.
I Peter 5:1-4 *"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: ²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."*
- E. Paul had a crown of rejoicing because of the people he won to Christ.
I Thessalonians 2:19-20 *"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰For you are our glory and joy."*

Conclusion:

The cross was a terrible instrument of death that Jesus suffered. However, His death freed us from the curse of sin and death and allowed us into the presence of God. If we will take up our cross, we can expect to receive the crowns that go with the cross. Hallelujah.