

Doctrinal Studies

Crowns

Timothy 4:8: *"In the future there is laid up [reserved] for me a wreath, a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will render to me in that day [the Bema or the Judgment Seat of Christ] and not only to me, but also to all the ones having loved His appearing."*

I. English terms:

- Crown: An ornamental wreath or garland for the head conferred by the ancients as a mark of victory or distinction
- Garland: A wreath or string of flowers, leaves or other material worn for an ornament or as a symbol of honor.
- Chaplet: A wreath or garland for the head made of beads.

II. Greek terms:

- Διαδήμα: *Diadema* — Crown: Rev. 12:3, 13; 19:12
- Στέφανος: *Stephanos* — Wreath: 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8

III. Analogy:

1. Paul used terminology familiar to the people of that day.
2. The term *stephanos*, or wreath, was the one used to describe the reward given to the winner of the national athletic contests.
3. The wreath itself was a decoration that represented great rewards given to the winner—among which were great monetary awards and a lifetime exemption from all taxation.
4. For the Christian the wreath represented the victory won in Time and in Eternity as a result of attaining Christian maturity. This is magnificently illustrated by the Greek Olympic games. These games were held every four years in the plain of Olympia in Elis, Greece, in honor of the Greek god Zeus. The rules for the athlete were very strict. The athlete had to:
 - Have proof of citizenship.
 - Be willing to undergo a rigorous ten month training period under the authority of the γυμνασιάρχ (gumnasiarch or absolute master of the gymnasium).
 - Be alert to all the trumpet calls.
 - Exercise in all kinds of weather.
 - Have no contact with the outside world.
 - Stay on a strict diet.
 - Obey all the rules of the *gumnasiarch*.

These rules have a parallel in the Christian life. They are:

- Salvation
- Restoration
- Perception
- Persistence
- Avoiding distractions
- Separation
- Obedience

5. The *stephanos*, the wreath, was not a crown of a King, but the decoration of a believer.

IV. Types or categories of wreaths:

1. Crown of Righteousness—2 Tim. 4:7, 8. This reward belongs to the maturity plus Christian. This is the one who while here on earth was oriented to God's grace, who could view things from God's vantage point, and who was saturated with God's thinking.
2. Crown of Life—Rev. 2:10; James 1:12. This reward belongs to the mature Christian great opposition and even persecution while on earth, but who was more occupied with Jesus Christ than overwhelmed by difficulty.
3. Crown of Glory—1 Pet. 5:4; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19–20; Heb. 6:7–12. This reward is a specialized crown for the communicators of God's Word who were faithful in that proclamation regardless of the response or lack of response.

Jesus Christ is the one who makes the decisions about who does or doesn't get the wreaths—2 Tim. 4:8; Psa. 9:7–8; Heb. 9:27.