

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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With heav'nly weapons I have fought
The battles of the Lord;
Finished my course, and kept the faith,
And wait the sure reward.

God has laid up in heav'n for me
A crown which cannot fade;
The righteous Judge at that great day
Shall place it on my head.

Nor hath the King of grace decreed
This prize for me alone;
But all that love and long to see
Th' appearance of His Son.

Jesus the Lord shall guard me safe
From every ill design;
And to His heav'nly kingdom keep
This feeble soul of mine.

God is my everlasting aid,
And hell shall rage in vain;
To Him be highest glory paid
And endless praise—Amen.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Receiving the Crown of Life

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

James 1:12

Who receives the crown of life? This is a “blessed” or “happy” person who endures testing as a child of the Lord. “A man is never miserable till he has lost his happiness” [Thomas Manton]. Here is evidence of one who perseveres in the Lord during times of affliction. The word “endureth” means one who consistently remains under the burden and does not

stop his service for the Lord. Here is one who endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. As an infant struggles to develop its abilities of coordination so the child of God through the tests of life develops his character and maturity.

What is the crown of life? The word used for crown is *stephanos* which was the crown of victory in the Grecian games but metaphorically in this text it is the crown of those who victoriously persevere in the faith once delivered to the saints. Thus, the crown of life was something that alluded to the victor's crown; it was something accomplished in finishing the race; it was something appreciated because of its giver; it was something awarded as a recompense of reward; it was something applied to the faithful; it was something approved of God.

Who bestowed the crown of life? "The Lord" promised the crown of life. The giver of all good and perfect gifts is the Lord. The unfailing Lord "promised" this crown which evidences certainty as the source of expectation. Oh, the value of the Lord's promises. John the Revelator wrote of this promise: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). All the Lord's promises are built on four pillars: "God's justice or holiness, which will not suffer Him to deceive; His grace or goodness, which will not suffer Him to forget; His truth, which will not suffer Him to change; His power, which maketh Him able to accomplish" [Thomas Manton].

What characterized the recipient of the crown of life? The recipient is called the "blessed" or "happy" man who endures temptation and loves the Lord. One could say the reason he endures is because he loves the Lord. Yes, the Lord's promise was "to them that love Him." "Love" is in the present tense showing continuous self-sacrificing love that kept on expressing itself in a life lived for the Lord in spite of the situation.

James Guthrie, the gospel minister and Covenantor, in his last message before his hanging and beheading said before the huge crowd, "I take God to record upon my soul, I would not exchange this scaffold with the palace and mitre of the greatest prelate in Britain. Blessed be God who has shown mercy to me such a wretch, and had revealed His Son in me, and made me a minister of the everlasting Gospel, and that He hath designed, in the midst of much contradiction from Satan, and the world, to seal my ministry upon the hearts of not a few of His people, and especially in the station where I was last, I mean ... Stirling. Jesus Christ is my Life and my Light, my Righteousness, my strength, and my salvation and all my desire. Him! O Him, I do with all the strength of my soul commend to you. Bless Him, O my soul, from henceforth even forever. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." He was faithful unto death. His head was placed on a pike at Netherbow Port of Edinburgh and left for twenty-seven years. His little son Willie would be found hiding for hours saying when discovered, "I've seen my faither's heid! I've seen my faithers heid!" Yes, he saw the head of his father

that was given for the love of the Lord and His service. Willie would come to grace and serve the Lord as well.

Charles H. Spurgeon asserted, “God will give to all His people by-and-by such a crown of life. There shall be no sickness: the inhabitant shall no more say, ‘I am sick.’ There shall be no weakness: even our body shall be raised with power. There shall be no dullness: we shall be forever fresh and young—led to living fountains of water. There shall be no emptiness, no sense of depletion, nor of want: we shall be for ever filled with all the fulness of God. There shall be no pain, no misery, but a plenitude of enjoyment at his right hand where there are pleasures for ever more. We shall possess and enjoy all that manhood can desire. All that you can ask or think shall be yours, and much more than that; inconceivable enjoyment, and bliss, and rapture, and ecstasy; all that be bestowed upon you by the unstinted hand of boundless love. Life shall crown all. All your life shall be crowned; and all the crown shall be life! ‘A crown of life.’

Does it not mean, however, as well—is it not a sort of Hebraism for a living crown? The crown they gave in the Olympic games soon faded. That bit of parsley, or olive, or laurel, was soon turned into faded leaves. But you shall have a living crown; that is to say, it shall never be taken from you, nor you from it....When time itself shall cease to be, and visible things shall die, and death itself shall be swallowed up, yet you shall not cease to be blessed, for you shall receive a living crown—a crown of everlasting life, which cannot know an end.”