

What crown has God promised us? How many crowns has God promised us?

In some places in the New Testament, the word crown is used metaphorically and specifically to denote honor. Phil 4:1 is just such a place: "Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!" Paul uses *crown* metaphorically of the precious lives of Christians in 1 Thess 2:19-20, saying he would glory in that crown: "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy." Here, Paul takes the precious Christians at Thessalonica to be a crown of glory.

However, the most common use is one that depicts the reward of highest estate that goes to those who have been faithful during their lives while here on earth. In 2 Tim 4:8, Paul spoke of the crown of righteousness for himself and for all who longed for his appearing: "Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing."

James 1:12 is very explicit that the crown of life goes to those who persevere and stand the test: "12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." In Revelation 2:10, the Lord told the church at Smyrna that if faithful even to the point of death, they would receive the crown of life: "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." In Revelation 3:11-12, the Lord also told the church at Philadelphia: "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God."

In addition to those Christians who remain faithful and overcome, the Lord has promised a crown to elders in the church. In 1 Peter 5:4, Peter addresses elders, calling himself a fellow elder: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." The Lord affirms this promise in Rev 4:4-5: "Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads."

In addition, the church, the bride of Christ, is described as wearing a beautiful crown in Rev 12:1: "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." Also, the crown of the Lord himself is described in Rev 14:14: "I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand."

All should aspire in their present lives to persevere and live faithfully unto death in order to receive the crown of life. The beginning point in this faithful walk is to obey Christ when he said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16. This is the salvation – the crown of life – that can only be secured by being faithful even unto death.