

## **2 Corinthians 12: 7**

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.*

## **2 Timothy 4: 8**

*Henceforth there is laid up 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 loved his appearing.*

Paul said that he was given a thorn in his flesh to keep him from becoming conceited. He had so many wonderful experiences being a minister of the Gospel. He saw amazing things and had powerful revelations.

**2 Corinthians 11:21-28.**

He was a Hebrew, an Israelite, and a descendant of Abraham, plus a servant of Christ. He worked harder than most, was imprisoned more frequently, flogged more severely, exposed to death repeatedly, beaten more harshly, stoned, and shipwrecked on three different occasions. He had faced danger from traveling, from rivers, from robbers, from fellow Jews, from non-Jews, from false believers, in cities, in the country, and at sea. He had gone without rest and sleep, known hunger and thirst, and had been cold and naked. He faced daily pressure and concern for all the churches, spiritual weakness, and temptation to sin. He suffered all of this for the sake of Christ.

## Paul's thorn in the flesh.

Paul speaks of a "thorn in the flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12:7. He calls it "a messenger of Satan" that had a purpose of "torment."

**TITLE**

**" CROWN IN THE THORNS "**

**1. Thorns and Crowns**

**2. God-prepared Crowns**

**3. Thorns Instead of a Crown**

**4. The Crowned King Replacing the Thorns**

Life is not a bed of roses but it is like a rose. There is beauty in its petals or crown but thorns in its stems.

# I. THORNS AND CROWNS

## Thorn:

- A thorn is a sharp, pointy protrusion that exists on the outside of some plants. They are embedded deeply into the woody structure of the branches, do not break easily, and exist to protect the plant from being eaten.
- A sharp, pointed protuberance on an animal; spine
- A thorn is something that wounds, annoys, or causes discomfort.



## **Crown:**

- A circular ornamental headdress worn by a monarch as a symbol of authority, usually made of or decorated with precious metals and jewels.

## **In the Old Testament.**

The concept of the crown originates from a cap, turban, or more formal metallic crown that was decorated with jewels. Its placement on one's head indicated that one was set apart (**nezer**) for a particular task or calling.

- Used for the high priest ( **Exod 29:6 ; 39:30 ; Lev 8:9** )
- For kings of Israel ( **2 Sam 1:10 ; 2 Kings 11:12 ; Psalm 89:39 ; 132:18** ).
- Indicated the **consecrated role** of its wearer, since it could be profaned ( **Psalm 89:39** ).

- In the case of the king it also reflected his **exalted position** ( Psalm 89:19-20 ).
- A second term for crown in the Old Testament (**atara**) indicated the **presence of honor**.
- To remove the crown was an indication of shame ( Eze 21:26 ).

The crown indicated the presence of honor as a cause for glory and joy.

- A good wife is a crown to her husband ( Prov 12:4 ).
- Grandchildren ( Prov 17:6 ),
- Living to old age ( Prov 16:31 ),
- Riches ( Prov 14:24 ),

- A good harvest ( **Psalm 65:11** ).
- God is also a crown .
- To experience the blessing of His character and activity on one's behalf is said to be a crown. His loving kindness and mercy can be a crown ( **Psalm 103:4** ), as can mere relationship with him ( **Isa 28:5** ).

## **In the New Testament.**

The Greek word translated "crown" is stephanos or "stevfano", and means "a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor."

In ancient Greek games, it referred to a wreath or garland of leaves placed on a victor's head as a reward for winning an athletic contest. Used eighteen times in the New Testament.

The crown is an honor received as a cause of joy.

## **II. GOD-PREPARED CROWNS**

### **Salvation is a Gift Not a Reward**

The judgment seat of Christ is not about salvation and it's not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins, but rather it is a time of recognizing those who have served the Lord faithfully with the gifts and talents God gave them.

### **Not Everyone Will Receive a Crown.**

The awarding of Crowns is based on the work done for the Lord. Not all works for the Lord will be rewarded because our motives will be judged.



**1 Corinthians 3:13-15** says, *"each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire"*.

The Five heavenly crowns mentioned in the New Testament.

**1) The Imperishable Crown – (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)** *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [disciplined] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown"* (NKJV).

Jesus urges us to not store our treasures on earth "*where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal*" (**Matthew 6:19**). This is analogous to what Paul was saying about that wreath of leaves that was soon to turn brittle and fall apart. But not so the heavenly crown; faithful endurance wins a heavenly reward which is "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*" (**1 Peter 1:4**).

The imperishable crown is a mark of royalty that will not be destroyed like the things of this world. Paul said it himself "*What we see is temporary. What is unseen is eternal*".

**(2 Corinthians 4:18)**

**The Imperishable Crown is given to those individuals who demonstrate "self-denial and perseverance".**

We need self-discipline. We must put aside every weight and sin that entangles us.

**2) The Crown of Rejoicing** – (1 Thessalonians 2:19) *"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?"*

Also known as the Crown of Exultation, or Crown of Auxiliary.

The apostle Paul tells us in **Philippians 4:4** to *"rejoice always in the Lord"* for all the bountiful blessings our gracious God has showered upon us.

Luke tells us there is rejoicing even now in heaven (Luke 15:7). The crown of rejoicing will be our reward *where "God will wipe away every tear . . . there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"* (Revelation 21:4).

When Jesus was ascending back to heaven, he left his disciples with what we call the great commission. This means they were to go out and win souls for the Lord.

There was a whole lot of hardship in the first century for Christianity. Despite this, Paul says "Rejoice!"

**The Crown of Rejoicing is a crown that is given to those who win souls for the Lord.** It is also known as the Soul-Winner's Crown. Every soul you win, or help to win, will come to your account and go toward your Crown of Rejoicing.

There is no greater joy than to see a soul saved. Even the whole heavens rejoice over one soul that repents. Are you a soul winner?

**3) The Crown of Righteousness – (2 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."*

It is an everlasting crown. Through our enduring discouragements, persecutions, sufferings, or even death, we know assuredly our reward is with Christ in eternity **(Philippians 3:20)**.

The Crown of Righteousness is the Winner's Crown—also known as the Overcomer's Crown or the Victor's Crown. It is a crown for those who finish their race well.



**It is given to all those who love and anticipate" the Second Coming of Christ, who fight the good fight of faith, who have finished the race and who have kept the faith.**

Do not give up when you are tried and tested. Jesus is coming soon.

**4) The Crown of Glory – (1 Peter 5:4)** *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."*

The word **glory** is the Greek word Δοξαδόξα. It refers to the nature of God, His Majesty, and the honor He, and only He is due. This word also means that the praise and honor we bestow to God alone is due Him because of **who He is** (Isaiah 42:8, 48:11; Galatians 1:5).

*"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18 NKJV).

The apostle Peter encourages the elders to keep serving the church diligently and not get tempted into going after worldly things. The tribulation they were experiencing wasn't very glorious. But the ugliness of circumstances is never an indicator of whether God's glory is there because it's always there.

Crown, a symbol of honor. God said, "*Those who honor me I will honor*" (**1 Sam. 2:30**). The one who serves Christ well in this life will be highly honored in the presence of God for all eternity.

**The Crown of Glory will be awarded to all those who have been faithful in their calling as ministers and servants of His people.**

**5) The Crown of Life** – (Revelation 2:10) *"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

In Scripture the word **"life"** is often used to show a relationship that is right with God. It was Jesus who said, *"I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). He is the One who provides **"living water."** He is the **"bread of life"** (John 4:10, 6:35).

Our earthly lives will end. But we have the amazing promise that comes only to those who come to God through Jesus: *"And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life"* (1 John 2:25).

***Dokimos***, refers to someone who is tested, tried, and approved. This kind of person has the seal of God's approval on their life, and that becomes clearer and clearer through their perseverance.

The **"crown of life,"** or the crown that consists of life, is "a picture of eternal life," which God promises to His people. It suggests the idea of God welcoming us at the finish line and crowning us with honor, blessing, and life that is everlasting.

Our test lasts until Christ returns or calls us home—and so here is a call to remain steadfast to the end.

**The Crown of Life is for all believers, but is especially dear to those who endure sufferings, who bravely confront persecution for Jesus, even to the point of death.**

- James tells us that this crown of life is for all those who love God to the point of death (**James 1:12**).
- Peter said the Crown of Glory is for all those who are called of God, who have obeyed God in their calling and who have faithfully served His people.
- Paul said the Crown of righteousness is promised to "those who love and anticipate" the Second Coming of Christ.

The Crown of rejoicing it is given to people who engage in evangelism of those outside the Church.

The Imperishable crown is given to those individuals who demonstrate "self-denial and perseverance".



## How do we work for these?

The apostle John said: *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome"* (**1 John 5:3**). As His children we must keep His commandments, obeying Him, always remaining faithful.

### **III. THORNS INSTEAD OF A CROWN**

When we speak about thorns of life, we are referring to challenges or struggles that we either live with or endure for a certain period of time.

- A thorn could be a handicap. Could be a disability or an illness. Could be an unfortunate family background.
- A thorn could be anything that has to do with our environment or circumstances.

- A thorn could be something that comes on us through no fault of our own.
- A thorn is something we don't like – something that is probably an embarrassment to us, something we are ashamed of.
- A thorn could be a sin that we cannot stop, such as some addictions. Our sins can cause us to slip and hurt us.

Thorn is a metaphor for sin. In **Genesis 3:18**, God curses the earth. Thorns were created as a punishment for the first sin.

But in the beginning God created man as a glorious creation because His glory was with him. But due to the fall his crown turned into a curse as he lost the glory that made him a little king.

Because of sin what God designed to be of great value grew thorns. The perfect creation including man has been saturated with thorns.

- **Chronic Illnesses**
- **Disabilities**
- **Mental Illnesses**
- **Unfulfilled desires**
- **Difficult relationships**

The once majestic creation has become a dying creation.

Therefore God sent His Heir, His own Son, the King of heaven, Jesus, so that man's curse that turns his crown to thorns would end. Jesus left his glory, His crown in heaven and took our thorns upon himself. He took the most painful and shameful crown – the crown of thorns.

Our sins removed the crown that was on Him since the beginning of time, but on the cross Jesus ended the thorns' fatal effects when He declared **"It is finished"**. He deserved all the precious crowns but He took the most painful and shameful crown so that we can have the assurance of glorious crowns.

When He rose from the dead there was no scar of wounds caused by the thorns on His head. The Bible tells us that after His resurrection He only showed his pierced hands and side to his doubting disciple but He did not show the mark of thorns on His head. Why? Because He was going to put on the crown of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

When you and I rise with Jesus, our pain, our thorns will be turned into crowns.

## **IV. THE CROWNED KING REPLACING THE THORNS**

God prepared crowns for everyone who are bought by the Blood of the Lamb. The crowns are for everyone who believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths the Lord Jesus Christ.

Being in Christ, you can turn your thorns into crowns and you can use those thorns to always remind you that it is for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.



The thorns are no longer potent to make you a pauper because you will use them to lay up treasures and crowns in heaven.

In Jesus, our crowns are made secure but we need to make a stand so that after everything, we will receive our crowns with a welcome, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."*

## **CONCLUSION:**

There are crowns waiting for each one of us who are in Christ because Jesus forsook His own crown and took our thorns – the crown of thorns upon himself when He died. And because He rose from the grave He also won all these crowns for us.

**1. The Imperishable Crown** - for those who demonstrate "self-denial and perseverance".

**2. The Crown of Rejoicing** – for those who win souls for the Lord

**3. The Crown of Righteousness** – for those who love and anticipate "the Second Coming of Christ", who fight the good fight of faith, who have finished the race and who have kept the faith.

**4. The Crown of Glory** – for those who have been faithful in their calling as ministers and servants of His people.

**5. The Crown of Life** – for those who endure sufferings, who bravely confront persecution for Jesus, even to the point of death.

All these crowns can replace the thorns of our lives. But the purpose of these crowns is not for us to glory in ourselves. It was won, done, **"finished"** for us, so that after everything, we will kneel around His throne casting all our crown at the feet of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, to whom all glory and honor is due.

