

**TITLE: PURSUING THE CROWN**

**TEXT: REVELATION 2:10; 2 TIMOTHY 4:8; JAMES 1:12; REVELATION 19:12**

**INTRO:** In the Bible there are several mentions of crowns: crowns worn by kings, Jesus' crown of thorns, the ultimate crown worn by God & Christ, and the crown promised to faithful Christians. Over the years, many have "mistaken" the meaning of these "crowns" in the NT. Pursuit of the wrong crown will end in failure, if no other reason, because we're not pursuing the *right* crown. In the NT, there are only 2 Greek words for "crown" (diadem & stephanos). This sermon will define & address both.

**I. DEFINITIONS:**

- A. "Diadem" (διαδημα) – "lit. 'bound around' (Strong); 'the kingly ornament for the head; the crown' (Thayer).
- B. "Stephanos" (στεφανος) – "a wreath; a prize in the public games; a symbol of honor" (Strong); "a mark of royal or exalted rank; the wreath or garland given as a prize to the victor; the reward of righteousness" (Thayer).

**II. "DIADEM" (διαδημα) – THE CROWN OF POWER/AUTHORITY:**

- A. **This crown belongs to God alone!** The word occurs only three times in the NT, the first two of which are used of Satan:
  - 1. **Rev 12:3**– "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads." This vision depicts Satan as wearing the diadem crown because this is the power/authority he craves (compare to the woman in **v. 1** (representing God's people) wearing the "stephanos" crown).
  - 2. **Rev 13:1**– "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." This is Satan's ally (Rome).
  - 3. **Rev 19:11-12**– "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself." Here we have the rightful owner of the diadem!
- B. **It is never man's or an angel's.** When Cornelius fell at Peter's feet and worshipped him, Peter immediately said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man!" When John tried to worship an angel, the angel said, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant...worship God" (**19:10**; also **22:9**). God never made man or angels to be worshipped! Only God is worthy of this!

**III. "STEPHANOS" (στεφανος) – THE CROWN OF VICTORY:**

- A. **THIS is the crown that's promised to God's faithful children.** This is the crown we strive for.
  - 1. **2 Tim 4:8**– "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." It's laid up – awaiting the faithful!
  - 2. **James 1:12**– "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." The faithful—those who endure temptation—are promised a crown of eternal life!
  - 3. **1 Pet 5:4**– "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." **Rev 4:4**– The 24 elders around the throne were wearing "stephanos" crowns in Heaven (showing this incorruptible victory). So this incorruptible crown is about spending eternity in Heaven.
  - 4. This is seen in **Phil 4:1**– "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. And **1 Thess 2:19**– "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Paul used this word "stephanos" to describe faithful brethren as his crown of rejoicing. He pictured his victory as not only going to Heaven, but taking others there as well (**Mt 6:20**)!
- B. **This crown requires all your effort.**  
**1 Cor 9:25**– "And every man that striveth (struggle, endeavor, fight) for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. This crown is compared to the victory won by the Olympic athletes. Every athlete is "temperate" (self-controlled) in all things. They eat right, exercise rigorously & constantly, and avoid **anything** that might hinder them from winning! This ought to describe our daily efforts to win our crown! If not, why not?"
- C. **This crown requires adherence to the rules.**  
Again, the Greek games are used as an analogy: **2 Tim 2:5**– "And if a man also strive for masteries (NAS– "competes as an athlete"), yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully (legitimately; according to the rules)." If a person wants to win the crown of victory God offers, he **must** do it by God's rules, not his own! This is another of several verses that shows us what our attitude should be about His Word. An athlete doesn't just do what he wants to do unless the rulebook says otherwise. He cares enough about winning that he **studies** the rule book in order to show himself approved (**2 Tim 2:15**)! Paul isn't teaching Timothy how to be a good athlete! This is about Christianity, and striving for the ultimate victory! We don't simply look to the Word for a "thou shalt not!" We study God's Word to find authority for our actions. We strive lawfully; we adhere to the rules!
- D. **This crown requires continued faithfulness.**  
**Rev 2:10**– "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. "Unto" means "even to the point of" death.
- E. **This crown is incorruptible.**  
**1 Cor 9:25**– "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an **incorruptible**. Athletes puts their whole lives into training for a moment of competition, all in hopes to win a trophy, medal, or ribbon! Even if they win, and even if the award lasts for the rest of their lives, it's still temporary & corruptible! Why not put the effort into something that matters (eternity)?! **1 Tim 4:8** – "Bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto **all** things; having promise of the life that now is, **and** of that which is to come!"
- F. **This crown is not guaranteed!** Just because this crown is incorruptible, doesn't mean it's guaranteed!  
**Rev 3:11**– To the church in Philadelphia: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Our promise of inheritance (our incorruptible crown) will not be given to us if we do not remain faithful!

**CONCLUSION:** So what crown do you pursue? Are you looking for a crown of deity (like Satan), or one of recognition & glory on Earth? Either way is a failure to pursue the right crown, and will end in spiritual destruction. So first, desire the *right* crown. Then learn & abide by the rules in order to achieve it (study the Bible)! Then, dedicate your life to it (**Rev 2:10**)! "We are more than conquerors..." (**Rom 8:37**)!