

Lesson 13 – A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

2 Timothy 4:6-8

(4:6) – Paul knew that he was coming to the end of his life here on earth. He knew he would soon be face to face with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He knew he was “**ready**” because of the sovereign grace, mercy, and power of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. He expresses confidence of faith in Christ as he had done many times before (*2 Tim. 1:12*). “**Ready to be offered**” means, literally, “ready to be poured out as a drink offering.” In the Old Testament sacrificial system, this was the final offering that followed the burnt and grain offerings prescribed for the people of Israel (*Num. 15:1-16*). Paul saw his impending death as his final offering to God. His whole life as a believer and an apostle had been sacrificed to the glory of God’s grace (*Rom. 12:1-2*). His readiness to meet God was not his own works or labor, and it was not in his sacrifices, but in Christ and Him crucified and risen again (*Php. 3:9-11*). The word “**departure**” describes a release as if to be set free. As Paul had already been freed in Christ as justified in and by Him (*Rom. 6:3-7*), and as he had already been freed in and by Christ as regenerated by Him through the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 6:17-18*), he would now be free “*from the body of this death*” as taken to be with Christ in glory (*Rom. 7:24-25*).

(4:7) – Many believe Paul was being boastful in stating these things, but he was merely expressing the evidences of God’s grace in his life and ministry. Paul knew and expressed that his only boast was Christ and Him crucified (*1 Cor. 2:1-2; Gal. 6:14*). “**I have fought a good fight**” — Paul applies the analogy of loyal, dedicated soldier to himself. This “**good fight**” is the same as doing the work of an evangelist. It is not fighting in our own power and goodness but in the power, grace, and goodness of God in Christ (*Eph. 6:10-18*). He applies the analogy of an athlete to himself. “**I have finished my course**” — The “**course**” was not one Paul set for himself but one God set for him. He finished this course, not in his own power and goodness, but in the power, grace, and goodness of God in Christ (*Heb. 12:1-2*). Paul also applies the analogy of a watchman or guardian to himself. “**I have kept the faith**” — Not only had he persevered in the faith by the grace of God, but he had also guarded the truth and standards of the revealed Word of God.

(4:8) – This is the reward of a true evangelist. It is not any reward Paul had earned by his obedience and diligence in the ministry. It was and is the reward of God’s grace earned for him, and all true believers, by the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “**crown**” literally means “*surrounding,*” and refers to the wreath placed on the heads of athletes who had won a race. Notice, however, that this “**crown**” was “**laid up**” (or reserved) for Paul. This indicates that the “**crown**” was reserved because someone else had earned it and reserved it for him. This is Christ Himself who is the “*Author and Finisher of our faith*” (*Heb. 12:2*). It is “**a crown of righteousness**” because, like Paul, all who

finish this course (or race) have been made righteous in Christ and receive the reward of His work, His grace. Notice also that this “**crown**” is GIVEN, by “**the Lord, the righteous Judge,**” not earned, by Paul. This is the grace of final glory based on the righteousness of Christ. God, the righteous Judge cannot save, preserve, reward, or entitle sinners to any part of salvation based on their best efforts to serve Him. If He did, He would not be a “**RIGHTEOUS Judge.**” Why? Because the wages of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (*Rom. 6:23*). God righteously judges all His people to be fully entitled to all the reward of heaven based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by faith. All of Paul’s efforts in obedience and ministry were only evidences of God’s grace in his life.

This “**crown of righteousness**” is reserved not only for Paul and other apostles, and not only for those who preach and teach the truth as it is in Christ, “**but unto all them also that love His appearing.**” This is all true believers who look for and hope in expectation for the second coming of Christ. We who are saved by God’s grace are equally forgiven, justified, and entitled to the whole inheritance of grace because of Christ and what He Himself accomplished for us in His obedience unto death. When we consider the life of the Apostle Paul (his growth, knowledge, passion for the glory of God, diligence, love of sinners and the church, boldness and courage, and perseverance), it would seem natural for us to believe that Paul would receive greater reward. But Paul himself states otherwise. He was adamant to give all the glory to the God of all grace, to give all the preeminence to Christ, and to reserve no room for boasting in himself (*1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*).