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Bridgeway Community Church
Series: CROWNS OVER FROWNS
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CROWNS OVER FROWNS:
“The Crown of Righteousness”

I. OPENING COMMENTS

Praise the Lord, Bridgeway!

Lady Amber and I celebrated our **33rd wedding anniversary** this week.

Shout outs to elder **Don & Deanne Rajala** and ECW **NeVin and Malcolm Branner** who also celebrated their anniversaries as well this week.

- The Branners celebrate 38 years.
- The Rajalas celebrated 49 years!

Lady Amber and I went to visit a city we have never been to before. New Orleans.

It was nice, but you guys owe me an APOLOGY.

Yep, as a congregation I am upset with you because after all of these years no one ever shared with their pastor about a pastry that I had never heard of until we went to New Orleans.

They were called Beignets! (ben-yays)... Warm dough with powdered sugar and chocolate dip or drip. Yummy!

Question:

Bridgeway, how is it that we can have a relationship for all these years and you have been holding back such a blessing to my soul and my mental health?

How many of you have ever had a beignet before?

Okay, YOU are the ones I am holding responsible. How are you going to receive a "crown of righteousness" holding back such yumminess from your pastor like that?

That's okay. I Forgive You! Maybe by forgiving you, I will receive an extra jewel in my crown when I get to heaven. Speaking of crowns and jewels, let's talk about this "*Crown of Righteousness*". BUT FIRST, let's pray!

II. SERMON INTRODUCTION

The "Crown of Righteousness" in eternity will be awarded to those believers who endure this Christian life faithfully to the very end.

If the "*Crown of Life*" is for those who persevere through various kinds of trials and persecution, as we learned last week, then the "Crown of Righteousness" is for those who endure the Christian race of life all the way to the very end.

This crown is a reward for "endurance".

- The Crown of Life is for PERSEVERANCE
- The Crown of Righteousness is for ENDURANCE
- Perseverance through the hard times and the difficult seasons of life is important.

But the idea of endurance is the idea of holding on for the "*long haul*"; for a *lifetime*.

Persevering through temporary trials is one thing, but enduring for a lifetime is something else.

It is like someone receiving a "Lifetime achievement award".

E.G. James JB Brown - In fact, Bridgeway, we have an acquaintance who just received a lifetime award in the sports world. He was one of our Winter Guest Speakers years ago. JB sent me the link to him receiving this prestigious award and in his text he wrote, I quote, "To GOD be ALL the glory."

In many ways, all of us will receive a reward in heaven called the Crown of Righteousness if we will endure this long Christian race until the very end.

- The idea of a lifelong marathon is a good picture of what the Christian life entails.
- Christianity is not a sprint.

- Christianity is not a phase.
- The Christian life is a long term
- As Christians we must take the long view and realize that our faith is eternal.

Christianity is a minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, year by year, decade by decade generational faith...

- God wants you to run this Christian race all the way to the very end.
- God wants you to make it all the way to the finish line.
- If you fall down, get back up.
- If you fall away, ask God to take you back.

When I was a teenager they used to sing a song in the youth choir at my church called "Take Me Back"...

- *"Take me back, take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first received you. Take me back, take me back, dear Lord, where I first believed."*

For some of you, that may be your prayer today.

- *"Take me back, dear Lord"*
- If you've been sidelined, shipwrecked, back-slidden, God is ready to take you back today.
- It is time to start dusting yourself off, and getting back into the Christian race.

Someone needs to hear me say that...

- Failure is *not an option*.
- Failure is *not a destination*.
- Failure is an event. It's *not your destiny*.
- Failure is not a place to live; *it is just a town that you had to pass through*.

I have declared, and you need to declare it too, that...

- Until I take my last breath, I will *serve the Lord*.
- Until I take my last breath, I will *praise the Lord*.
- Until I take my last breath, I will *worship the Lord*.
- Until my last breath, I will fight the good fight of faith!

I WILL finish my course!

I WILL keep the faith!

DECLARE IT WITH ME...

- I WILL fight the good fight of faith
- I WILL finish my course
- I WILL keep the faith

Question:

How many of you know sometimes you have to preach to yourself?

Sometimes you have to tell yourself the truth. Sometimes you have to speak to your spirit, God's word, when your flesh was to fail you. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

That's when you start DECLARING! There's a difference between *declaring* and *manifesting*.

You can't manifest anything! GOD is the only one who can manifest miracles, manifest his presence, and manifest his glory! You can declare his Word by faith, but you can't manifest *anything*. You don't demand, but you declare, and God decides whether or not he will manifest it for HIS glory and for YOUR gain!

But that is why we declare, like Paul...

- *I WILL fight the good fight of faith*
- *I WILL finish my course*
- *I WILL keep the faith*

The Apostle Paul is our prime example here!

Paul put it like this in his last letter to his mentee, Timothy.

Please turn with me to **2 Timothy 4:6-8**...

- *6 "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 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." (2 Timothy 4:6-8 NIV84)*

SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

**The crown of righteousness is awarded to those who endure the Christian race to the very end
(2 Timothy 4:6-10)**

I want to offer 3 Observations from this passage that will affect our eternity...

III. 3 OBSERVATIONS FROM 2 TIMOTHY 4:6-10

1. We all have a TIME (v.6)

- *6 "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the TIME has come for my departure. (2 Timothy 4:6 NIV84)*

Friends, we all have a time when we will die in this life.

I don't know when my time is.

You don't know when your time will be.

But we all have a time!

E.G. - Two U.S. missionaries were killed this week in Haiti. Davy and Natalie Lloyd, along with a Haitian church leader named Jude Montis, were murdered by Haitian gang leaders. 23 and 21 years old. I honor them, and may God honor them with the crown of righteousness for enduring persecution.

E.G. - A 73 year old man died as an airplane hit turbulence this past week surprisingly on a Singaporean flight. Over 100 people were injured.

E.G. - My dad died unexpectedly at age 60 during his recovery in Washington Adventist Hospital from a gallbladder operation. (I think about this regularly as I approach the age of 60)

E.G. - NOVA Music Festival in Israel (hundreds of young people were at a music festival in Israel celebrating a Jewish holiday when the terrorist group, Hamas, savagely invaded the festival and killed over 300 attendees, many of whom were in their 20s)

E.G. - NFL football player collapsed on the field during the 2023 football season (24 year old Damar Hamlin from the Buffalo Bills). Thankfully, he survived. *It wasn't his time*. Praise the Lord.

Bottom line:

Whether 23 or 73, *no one knows when their TIME is.*

But your TIME will come...

- Are you ready?
- Are you living for Christ?
- Are you living out your purpose?

God put you on this earth for a purpose. He has a plan for you.

Don't squander this one life you have to live.

E.G. - We are all like Parking Meters (one day we will all expire). Unless Christ returns first, we will all die physically. We all have a TIME.

That's observation #1. Secondly...

2. We all have a TESTIMONY (v.7)

- 7 "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*"
(2 Timothy 4:7 NIV84)

The Apostle Paul is saying... I *fought*. I *finished*. I was *faithful*.

Notice these active words...

- Paul didn't just let life come to him
- He didn't simply go through life passively.
- He took life by the horns for Christ and worked hard to advance the kingdom of God.
- He gave glory to God in His calling.

This is what I love about **James JB Brown's** testimony...

- As a Sports broadcaster, a CBS correspondent, and 60 minutes Correspondent, he was and IS excellent in his craft and in his calling.
- All the while, *he is a witness for Christ!*
- There are times when JB has called to say:
 - *"Pastor, I am speaking on reconciliation to men at a retreat or church and I want to run my message by you because I respect your teaching on this topic."*
 - *"I just want to make sure I am faithfully and rightly dividing the word of truth."*
- I'm like, *"why are you calling me? I look up to you and the great voice and platform God has given you."*

JB is humble and loves to give God praise.

Main Point:

Whether you are a lawyer, a business owner, an artist, a technician, a musician, an engineer, a bus driver, or a homemaker, a nurse, are you a good witness for Christ?

Are you a good testimony for Christ?

I hope so.

I try to be, but I don't always get it right.

- **E.G. STORIES of being recognized at RESTAURANTS & the GYM** (examples of going out to **1.** National Harbor hotel with Amber, **2.** In NOLA last week, **3.** Supreme Sports Club in the shower years ago, **4.** Doctor's physical a few years ago)

We all have a testimony!

Question:
What's yours?

What do others say about you?

What do they say about your faith?

Do they even know that you're a follower of Christ by the way you live, speak, and love?

It is not about being recognized. It is about living a life that honors God...

We can't please everyone. We can't seek everyone's approval. We can't chase down every rumor about us...

But we can FIGHT the good fight for Christ.

We can FINISH the race strong for Christ.

We can KEEP the FAITH all the way to the very end.

We all have a *Time*...

We all have a *Testimony*...

Lastly, the 3rd observation from this passage that will affect our eternity...

3. We all will have a TROPHY – if we endure (v.8)

- *8 "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." (2 Timothy 4:8 NIV84)*

SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

**The crown of righteousness is awarded to those who endure the Christian race to the very end
(2 Timothy 4:6-10)**

Paul says it is the Lord himself, the righteous Judge, who will do the awarding.

Jesus knows how to judge righteously.

When people are not sure about their loved one's eternity and they ask me at a funeral about this, I always refer back to what Abraham says to the Lord in **Genesis 18:25**...

- *"Will not the judge of all the earth do right?"* (**Genesis 18:25 NIV84**)

God is righteous and He judges righteously. God is not going to misjudge. Only humans misjudge! God knows who to judge and how to judge between the righteousness and the wicked.

We don't!!

He knows how to reward us based on what our motives were when we were serving him.

In **1 Corinthians 3** it says that the good works we do will fall into two categories...

1. Gold and precious stones
2. Wood, hay, and stubble

It is all according to our motives.

Listen to what it says...

- *7 "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."* (**1 Corinthians 3:7-15 NIV84**)

This passage is about our rewards in heaven based on our works on the earth.

This is not about working for our salvation, but for those who are already saved and are working for God.

In **2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV84)** it says it like this...

- *10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*

This judgment seat is known as the BEMA seat of Christ. This is the judgment for believers and the rewards they will receive...This is a judgment of COMMENDATION.

The other judgment seat of Christ, found in Revelation, is known as the WHITE THRONE judgment. That is a judgment of CONDEMNATION. (**Revelation 20:11 NIV84**)

To be clear, there are *two judgments in eternity...*

1. The judgment of COMMENDATION (2 Corinthians 5:10)

- For believers rewards. Like the judges of a chili cook off, there are prizes for which is better, but it is not a condemnation.

2. The judgment of CONDEMNATION (Revelation 20:11)

- For unbelievers. Like a sentencing of a Judge in a court of law for those who refused to receive the price Jesus paid for the penalty of their sins. Now they have to pay for it themselves.

Question:

Which judgment do you want to face?

One of *commendation* (awards ceremony) OR one of *condemnation* (sentencing hearing)?

One will be full of **Crowns**. The other will be full of **Frowns**.

God loves you and wants you to have "Crowns Over Frowns!"

- We all have a TIME

- We all have a TESTIMONY
- We all have the possibilities to receive many TROPHIES.

IV. CONCLUSION & PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Let me give you a few practical applications...

1. Let Grudges Go

- Life is too short to hold grudges too long. Forgive!
- Forgiveness doesn't always mean reconciliation.
- You don't have to reestablish trusting relationships with everyone who has broken your trust or has hurt you.
- But you can forgive them

2. Make Wrongs Right (when you can)

- If you need to apologize, then do so
- Don't let your pride keep you from apologizing and making amends for wrongdoing.

3. Be Determined to Finish Well

- Choose to fight to the very end
- The word endurance means to *End-Your-Race*.
- May the Lord say those 7 beautiful words to you one day as you cross the finish line of life: "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" (**Matthew 25:23 KJV**)

These 3 Practical Applications are truly *the Secret Sauce of Endurance* to the very end.

1. Let grudges go

- If you don't, it will lead to an *embittered heart*.

2. Make wrongs right

- If you don't, it will lead to a *soured soul* of regret.

3. Be determined to finish well

- If you don't, it will lead to a *weakened will* where you have resolved yourself to a life of religious mediocrity.

If you want to see what an unenduring, uninspiring, carnal Christian looks like, there it is...

- ...A “used-to-be-on-fire Christian” who has devolved into a religiously secular person *with an embittered heart, a soured soul, and a weakened will to honor God.*

They have no fight left...

They have no finish left...

They basically have no faith left...

Question:

Do you know anyone like this?

- They used to be on fire for God?
- They used to talk to God?
- They used to talk about God
- But now they are “*spiritual dropouts*”!

E.G. DEMAS - This is exactly the picture of Demas in **verse 10**. He was a “*spiritual drop-out*.”

- “9 Do your best to come to me quickly, 10 for Demas, *because he loved this world*, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.” (2 Timothy 4:9-10 NIV84)

“This world” in Greek is the word for *age*. Because he loved this present world and the world-of-this-age, there will be no “crown of righteousness” for him.

SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

**The crown of righteousness is awarded to those who endure the Christian race to the very end
(2 Timothy 4:6-10)**

Next week, I will talk about the "Crown of glory" and what we will do with all of these crowns once we receive them when we get to heaven.

CLOSER (*I have a gift for everyone who is local in the DMV area*):

- Because I want an extra jewel in my crown of righteousness, I chose to forgive you for not telling me about those beignets.
- I want to put into practice one of the books I wrote called "*I Forgrace You - Doing Good to Those who Hurt You*".
- I am providing beignets for all of you today after church.

If you're at our OMR campus, I have hired a small business from Baltimore called **Ice Queens** recommended by a woman on my FB page, **Ms. April R Smith**, to provide you with a free hot beignet after the service.

- Pastor Michener will give you more details when I turn the service over to him.

Now, for those of you in Columbia or locally online, I have something for you too.

- If anyone from Bridgeway Shows up at Ice Queens in Baltimore between 3 and 5pm today, Ice Queens will bless anyone who references "**Bridgeway or Dr. Anderson** " **with one free beignet** as long as you purchase one item from Ice Queens.
- I hear their Ice cream & snoballs are to die for.
- Oh, and by the way, I will be there myself between 3 & 4pm! Even if you can't afford to buy something, get your one free beignet. Just use my name. **1648 E Fort Ave, Baltimore, MD** is the address. Let's support this locally owned business and get our beignets on at the same time for our mental health! :-)
Who's in?

Happy Memorial Day weekend, Bridgeway!