

THE "CROWN OF LIFE" – WHO WILL RECEIVE IT?

"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." – James 1:12.

THE above words of the Apostle James are a part of an earnest exhortation to all the Church of God scattered abroad. "Blessed is the man who endureth [with fortitude] temptation." Those who do not love the Lord with all their hearts, in whom self or some other idol has first place, will be seduced by the world, the flesh or the Devil into some form of rebellion against the Divine Word or Divine providences. They will have schemes, theories or desires which they will prefer to the Lord's Plan and way; and their own theories, plans and ways will be found, when analyzed, to be based upon selfishness and ambition or an evil spirit of envy, hatred, jealousy, pride, etc. It is only such as endure such temptations and besetments with fortitude, by the grace of God conquering and subduing the fleshly mind, that will receive the promised crown.

The Apostle here speaks of the final reward as being "the crown of life." It might be possible to view this matter of the crown of life from different standpoints; for instance, to think of life as being a crowning blessing, on whatever plane of being. Those who will be brought into the Lord's favor during the Millennial Age will, after the close of that Age, if proven worthy, gain everlasting life. In other words, they will be crowned with a life which will be endless. The Ancient Worthies will have this life everlasting. They will be crowned with life. Life, perfect, unending, is the greatest blessing God could bestow. Then the Little Flock will be especially crowned with life; for they will have life on the superior plane, the life of the Divine nature – the nature of Jehovah; life in the very highest form will be their crown. So we think of all these things as being crowns

of life when all have been tested and proven to the end of their course.

THE CROWN ABOVE ALL OTHERS

But we have reason to suppose that St. James is here referring to the Church, the Bride of Christ, the most blessed of all humanity. The Church is now especially on trial. This trial of our love, endurance, faith, patience, is for the purpose of demonstrating which of us will be found worthy of the chiefest of all blessings – the Divine nature, which God has promised to those who love Him – love Him more than they love houses or lands or bonds, more than they love wife or husband or parents or children or self, or any other thing. God will have a reward for others, also; but it will not be this highest crown, which He offers to the Bride of His Son alone.

What constitutes the temptation spoken of in our text? The answer of the Scriptures is that the Lord has said there will come trials and temptations – disciplinings – to those who are His, to develop their character, to prove their steadfastness and loyalty. Without trials and temptations our allegiance to God would never be shown. Self-love might be reigning in our hearts, and we would not recognize it unless it were demonstrated. It is very easy to think how much we love the Lord and how much we would like to do for Him. Then comes the temptation to sloth, and to do something for ourselves instead of for the Lord. It is easy for us to think we love His will, and to sing:

"I love Thy will, O God."

Then we are severely tried on that line, and we sometimes find out that our love for His will needs yet farther development and greater fixity.

Our covenant with the Lord is to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We

are to live up to this standard in the spirit of our minds so far as we are able by Divine assistance, trusting to the merit of the precious blood to cover our unavoidable deficiencies. Yea, we are to "lay down our lives for the brethren." The temptation comes to love other things more, to love self more than we love God and the brethren. The Lord permits these trials and temptations and difficulties to come to us. The way we meet these, we think, will have much to do in deciding whether we shall be worthy of the highest crown of life.

THE CROWN OF LIFE AFTER THE TRIAL

"When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life." The expression, "when he is tried," does not mean one trial merely; but our entire experience is spoken of as a trial, a test of loyalty. Our whole life is a matter of trial or testing to see how sincere we are, how fully we love the Lord, what we are willing to sacrifice, in harmony with our covenant. "When he is tried," then, means, when his trial is over. Then he will receive the "crown of life." He will not get it before. That would not necessarily mean, however, that he would get the crown the minute the trial was over – as soon as his sacrifice was completed in death. Jesus slept until the third day before He received His crown. The Apostles and others slept for many centuries before they received theirs.

It does not mean, either, that the very minute or the very day on which the Christian had fully demonstrated his faithfulness to the Lord he would immediately fall asleep or would be instantly ushered into honor and immortality by the glorious change of the First Resurrection. The Lord might have further purposes of usefulness, etc., in regard to His children before their sacrifice would be completed. **[R5688 : page 151]**

So with every phase of our trial and testing there should be a demonstration of our loyalty. Let the trials come, then, and let them continue to come. No matter what our natural infirmities may be, we

shall be granted grace sufficient; and we are expected to be loyal under all conditions, at all times, until the end.

=====