

REWARD AND TEMPTATION

JAMES 1:12-18

A believer who faithfully endures a trial has, in the eyes of God, accomplished something extremely significant. So much so that He honors His faithful child with the reward reserved for overcomers, for victors who have bested their opponents in the arena or on the battlefield.

GOD HONORS THOSE WHO FAITHFULLY ENDURE (JAMES 1:12 ESV)

The *crown* is a *stephanos*; it is the laurel wreath awarded Olympic athletes. It recognized and honored the *agonizomai* - the agonizing, painful training - endured by the athlete in order to overcome the competition and win.

James taps into this imagery to reveal how serious this matter is in the eyes of God. To God, the man, the woman, the young person who agonizes - who struggles mightily - to trust and obey Him in the midst of a trial is worthy of the *stephanos*, the crown of champions.

What does it mean to receive the crown of life?

There are at least two possibilities. The first is that the *crown of life* is one of five crowns to be awarded faithful believers at the *judgment seat of Christ* ([1 Cor. 3:10-15](#)).¹ I have listed the five crowns and their references in your footnotes. In favor of this view are many passages that reveal rewards in the future for faithful service now. In addition, in the Greek text, *receive* is in the future tense as correctly translated in the ESV. However, the future tense can fit both interpretations.

Another possibility is that the *crown of life* refers to a near term reward of a deeper, richer experience of God's life in the present. In favor of this interpretation is the fact that in the Greek text the blessed man is the one who has remained steadfast under a trial, singular. He is blessed in the here and now. In this view, each victory of steadfastness under trial is rewarded with a richer, deeper experience of God's life in the here and now just as an Olympic athlete was rewarded with the *stephanos of laurel* immediately after each victory in the Games.

Why does God so highly honor those who faithfully endure trials?

Because enduring requires *agonizomai* - strenuous, painful effort - to defeat a temptation to sin.

Not every believer remains steadfast under trial. The double-minded believer doubts God. The wealthy believer depends upon his riches and fades away. Some believers who fail to endure blame God.

FAILURE TO ENDURE IS OUR FAULT, NOT GOD'S (JAMES 1:13-15)

The same term translated *trial* in verse 2 is translated *tempted* in verse 13. The basic meaning of *peirasmos* is to *test*. In the case of a *trial* it is a test in a positive manner to show the quality of one's faith: that it is genuine and enduring. On the other hand, in the case of temptation, it is a test in a negative manner to entice a believer to do evil. What was the serpent's goal in his conversation with Eve? It was to entice her to do evil.

It is not far-fetched at all that a believer under trial who has succumbed to temptation and sinned would blame God. What was Adam's response to God after he gave into temptation and ate the fruit God had forbidden him to eat? "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Essentially Adam was saying, "I wouldn't be in this situation if You, God, hadn't given me Eve."

God never, never, tempts us to sin. Our desires make us susceptible to temptation; even good desires make us susceptible to temptation - to fulfill our good desires in an evil way. If we find ourselves tempted to sin in the midst of trial, it is not God, but our desires pulling us towards sin. That's where the battle lies in a trial; to agonize with

¹ Five crowns are revealed in the New Testament: the *imperishable crown* for those who have victory over the flesh ([1 Cor. 9:24-27](#)); the *crown of boasting* for those who win others to Jesus ([1 Thess. 2:17-19](#)); the *crown of righteousness* for those who keep the faith doctrinally and morally ([2 Tim. 4:6-8](#)); the *crown of life* for those who remain steadfast through trials ([James 1:12](#)); the *crown of glory* for church elders who serve faithfully ([1 Peter 5:1-5](#)).

strenuous effort to resist temptation and to continue to walk in obedience to the Lord. To be clear, I don't think it's one and done. Most trials are a process and if a time or two we give way to temptation and sin it doesn't necessarily indicate failure to endure. What do we do to make it right? We confess, repent and do the works of repentance ([1 John 1:9](#)) and get back on track. The great danger is if we quit struggling against the temptation and give in to it and it becomes habitual. Habitual sin may bring upon us various forms of divine discipline, even the divine discipline of physical death.

Herein is the great contrast, the believer who struggles mightily to overcome temptation to sin receives the *crown of life*. The believer who succumbs to temptation to sin may receive the sentence of death.

But that is not what God wants for any believer. God is for us. God is working in us to be overcomers. He never tempts us to do evil. He only gives good gifts.

GOD ONLY AND EVER GIVES GOOD GIFTS (JAMES 1:16–18)

About what should we not be deceived?

God does not tempt us to sin (1:13)!

God will never tempt us to sin because of His character and because of His purposes in our lives. God only gives good and perfect gifts and because of His unchanging nature, He has always and only given good and perfect gifts. What is the best and most perfect gift He has given us? Our salvation!

The God Who saved us from sin will never tempt us to sin!

That is unthinkable and contrary to the changes He wants to make in us through trials. Though trials may be painful and full of temptation, we realize that those points of temptation are exactly the things in our lives God wants to change. God wants to work for our good through each trial, not for our failure.

God is using trials to change us and to reveal what yet needs to be changed in us.

KEY POINTS FROM JAMES 1:12-18

God promises the *crown of life* for those who love Him and who remain steadfast in trials.

God does not tempt us to sin in the midst of trials. We are tempted to sin by desires within ourselves.

God gives only good and perfect gifts – He saved us!

VOM January Donations: heavy duty light colored tarps (8'x10") / financial donations for tarps / band aids.

Women's Ministry Worship Gathering: Friday, January 28th, 6PM

Men's Horseshoe Tournament: January 29th, 12Noon

Baptism Class: Sunday February 6 & 13.