***Crowns in Heaven - PH77-02  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:1-3***

Please open your Bibles to Philippians 4. For many months now we have been in the study of Philippians. This has been a study which is in the form of an advanced Bible doctrine course. The Book of Philippians has been our jumping off point as doctrines have come into focus for studying those doctrines in depth. We have covered many of them thus far. We are now three-fourths of the way through the advanced Bible Doctrine course. Now we begin the final portion of that study. This is a study of happiness. That is the point of Philippians: how to live in Satan's World during the era of the angelic conflict, and how to be happy.

The apostle Paul, back in Philippians 3:1 exhorted the Philippian Christians to pursue happiness when he said, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Then beginning in Philippians 3:2, he interrupted himself with a digression which continued through the rest of that chapter. This was a digression that dealt with several factors that are destructive to personal happiness, particularly in the form of legalism.

Now, beginning in Philippians 4, he comes back from his digression and picks up the theme of happiness again. Philippians 3 has closed with Paul's directions to the Christians to be occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the third chapter, he has pointed out that this is done in various ways. Remember that this is the name of the game in the Christian life – occupation with Christ. So he comes back to the theme of happiness. Occupation with Christ leads to happiness. He's going to tie up this book with some very specific references and applications of happiness in the Christian life...

In verse 1, the apostle Paul says, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and long for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Here, first of all, he begins with an appeal for stability. The word "therefore" is the Greek word "hoste," and it means "so then" or "for this reason." This is the word that the Greek writer would use when he wanted to introduce a conclusion – the result of something. Here, he is introducing the result of being a citizen in heaven with the destiny of a resurrected body which is free of its present humiliation. This is true of us, who we are, and what we are going to be. He says, "Therefore (thus)." And he uses this word to say, "Here is a conclusion." Here is something which should logically and properly follow upon that destiny.

He introduces a series of exhortations which are closely linked to chapter three, particularly to verses 20-21, where he speaks about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, and what that will mean to us personally. The people that he is speaking to, he calls, "Brethren." The Greek word is "adelphos." "Adelphos" indicates that the apostle Paul is speaking to fellow believers – people who are in the family of God. Therefore, he is talking to us believers today. He is talking to people who have experienced mutually the new birth. They have had the born-again experience. He calls them, "My," which is the Greek word "ego," which is in the case that means "of mine" – the Philippians who are spiritually related to the apostle Paul. It is, "My particular brethren" to whom he is related.

**Dearly Beloved**

He calls them "Dearly beloved." That is the Greek word "agapetos." "Agapetos," you will immediately see from this first part of the word, is related to a particular Greek word for love: "agape" love. "Agape" love is the Greek word for love that does not have any emotional connotations. This is the word that the Bible uses when it says, "Love your enemies." Obviously, you could not love your enemies in an emotional sense, especially in certain conditions like on the field of battle. What you have is not affection for your enemy, but you have antagonism toward your enemy. But nevertheless, even in the midst of battle, there can be freedom from mental bitterness, and that's what this word means. This is a love which is free from any mental antagonism and any mental ill will. This is the word that he uses in reference to these Christians in the Philippians. He speaks of them as brethren, because toward them, he does not have any mental ill will. He had this toward the Corinthians as well, in spite of what they were.

This is the word which is used in Matthew 3:17, where the Father speaks of Christ as His Beloved Son. Also in Matthew 17:5, He says," This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased – My "agapetos" Son. It means, "Here is the Son toward whom I have no mental reservations; no mental condemnation; and, no mental ill will. The Lord Jesus Christ, in Ephesians 1:6, is called the Beloved: "To the praise of the glory of His grace, through which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. So the Lord Jesus Christ is called the Beloved – the "agapetos" one. We, as believers, are in the Beloved. This is the location of the Christian, and that's why the Bible uses the term "in Christ." Because He is called the Beloved, and we are part of Him, we are in the Beloved. The term "beloved" describes how God feels toward His Son – God's mental attitude toward His Son.

Therefore, we who are in Christ also have that same attitude of God toward us. If you are not a Christian (you are not in Christ), then you are not in a position where you have God's goodwill toward you. What you have instead is God's wrath toward you. So several places in the Bible refer to Jesus Christ as the Beloved One (1 John 3:2, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 6:9). You and I are made worthy only because we are in the Beloved – not because there's something in ourselves; not because we produce something; and, not because we have come up with something.

Many Christians are brainwashed into the idea that somehow they make themselves acceptable to God even as believers. They have the idea that their hustling is what makes them acceptable, and brings them under God's favor and blessing. We are under His favor and we are under His blessing because of who and what Christ is alone, and for no other reason. So because we are in the Beloved, we are in the position where we have God's mental goodwill toward us. This is the word that Paul is using, related to this idea, when he calls these Christians, "Dearly beloved."

This is the word which actually describes the normal attitude of a Christian who has this spiritual maturity structure built in his soul. The normal attitude of a Christian with that in his soul is to look upon other believers as "dearly beloved." That is because he has a relaxed mental attitude. A relaxed mental attitude means that you have "agape" love controlling your thinking.

Now, this is not a pretense word. A lot of professional preachers use this word as a public relations word. They regularly call their congregation "dearly beloved," and they say it in a very mellifluous voice, and they roll their eyeballs skyward toward heaven as they say it. This warms the cockles of a lot of people's dumb hearts. But this isn't the way the apostle Paul is using the word "beloved." He is using it in a most genuine way, in the finest sense of a mature Christian. He's looking upon people with genuine mental attitude love. He's not using this word just to convey an image of being solicitous.

If you listen to the really professional preacher, you will spot the fact that he uses certain words. He keeps complimenting the congregation. One of the words he loves to use toward the congregation is the word "fine." When he's really warm to the subject, he doubles it: "Fine, fine people." He has these code words that just give the idea of his concern and his solicitous attitude, and, of course, the depth of his feeling for the people.

However, if you listen more closely, you will also discover that along with the use of these image-making words, he has no content to his preaching. He can't instruct the people. Therefore, in order to cover his lack of preparation to instruct, he uses code words to create images of emotions and concern for them when it's really a hollow, empty thing. When the apostle Paul said, "Dearly beloved," he didn't mean it the way that you hear a lot of preachers say it – simply for the effects. For him, it was a genuine expression which he had toward these Philippian Christians.

However, I want you to remember that every Philippian Christian was constituted the way every Christian is constituted today – with a big, fat, old sin nature right there within him. It had a capacity for sins, and it had a capacity for human good, both of which come together and form a stream, which the Bible calls evil. For that reason, God condemns the sins of the old sin nature, but he also condemns the human good – the righteousnesses that come out of the old sin nature. The apostle Paul dealt with Philippians who had a side to their old sin nature which was ascetic, and they presented a very fine public image. He had some people who were on the lascivious side, and they presented a very bad image. But it didn't matter what the tendencies were of their old sin natures. It didn't matter what the old sin nature was doing. The fact that they had an old sin nature, they were still "dearly beloved." Why? How could Paul call them this when he hated everything out of the old sin nature? Why could he call them "dearly beloved?" Because they were in Christ, the Beloved One.

So this term, "Brethren, dearly beloved" is a term that has great theological meaning to it. It's a term that identifies, first of all, the apostle Paul's mental attitude toward his fellow Christians, and which gives us a clue of our own mental attitude toward other believers. Anybody who has spiritual maturity and is moving toward the super grace life will be characterized by this spirit of mental attitude goodwill toward other Christians, in spite of the old sin natures in those other Christians, and in spite of the expressions of that old sin nature toward you personally as a Christian.

He adds another word which does have an emotional connotation of his feeling for these people. For he also describes them as, "Longed for." This is the Greek word "epipothetos." It comes from two words. The first part, "epi," is a little preposition which means "upon." The second part, "pothetos" means "desire" or "longing." When it's put together, it intensifies the idea of longing. That's why he has the idea of "Longed for," or "passionately desired" – somebody that he has an emotional attachment for of a very great nature. So we would translate it as "greatly desired" or "passionately longed for. It connotes a feeling of love. It connotes an emotional quality, as the previous word "agapetos" connoted a mental attitude on his part. So we have both the qualities here. One is a mental expression of how Paul looks upon the Philippian Christians. The other is his emotional attitude toward them – "Dearly beloved and longed for." This is his mental attitude and his emotional love for the Philippians.

The reason for all this, of course, was that, as we have discovered, the Philippian church was a splendid church. It was filled with people who were positive toward doctrine. They were positive toward instruction in the Word. They were not resisting mulish foot-draggers. Consequently, all over that congregation, there were people who had gone well on the way up toward spiritual maturity in their souls, and many of them had plateaued out on the marvelous level of the super grace life: "My dearly beloved."

"Therefore, my brethren and dearly beloved and longed for, my joy." And he describes again how they are to him personally with the word joy ("chara"). The Philippians were a source of joy to Paul and his ministry. The reason for this was their positive response to doctrine as we have indicated. This same attitude was expressed by the apostle John in those two little letters that he wrote that we have near the end of the Bible. In 2 John 4, he says, "I rejoice greatly that I have found of your children walking in the truth, as we have received the commandment from the Father." Then, in 3 John 3-4, he says, "For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, even as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

When the apostle Paul said that the Philippians were his "chara," his joy, he was saying the same thing that John is saying. They were his joy because they walked in the truth of the Word of God. Not all of the church members of Paul's congregations were a source of happiness to him. As a matter of fact, most congregations are so pathetically carnal that they're more like a millstone around a preacher's neck than a crown of joy on his head. The reason for that is not entirely the fault of the congregations. The fault usually lies because most preachers were not like Paul in that Paul was a faithful teacher of doctrine. He taught and he taught and taught, and he understood what his mission was in life – to feed the flock of God on the Word of God. He didn't get sidetracked with all kinds of other things that preachers and churches can do.

Some congregations, like the Corinthian church, were horribly negative toward doctrine, and they were no joy to Paul at all. But the Philippians were a joy to him because they were positive to the Word. There is a basic happiness for any pastor-teacher that comes from seeing the grace of God having a chance to work in the lives of those he teaches. Remember that those who are a source of joy to Paul still have an old sin nature. Normally the old sin nature is a depressive factor on happiness. But these people, because they have moved toward spiritual maturity, have neutralized the old sin nature's effect, and thus they have experienced joy. They have been happy and Paul has been happy as the result of what they've been doing.

It is doctrine alone that enables a pastor-teacher and a congregation both to move into a relationship of happiness in this life. For that reason, he adds to the word "joy," something that they have now become to him, and he calls it "crown." This is the Greek word "stephanos." You can see immediately that this is where we get the English name "Stephen." The word "Stephen" means "a crown." This is one of two Greek words that the New Testament uses for "crowns." So let's look at this one first, because this has a very specific meaning. This is a crown in terms of a victor's crown. There is another crown which is like a king wears as a sign of royal authority. But this is a victor's crown. This is a crown of recognizing some achievement. It is a symbol of triumph, for example, in a game. Or it's a reward (a prize) for something accomplished.

We have it used, for example, in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, where Paul says, "Don't you know that they who run in a race run all, but one receives the prize?" So run that you may obtain" (that is, the prize). What is the prize? "And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible crown." The crown that is referred to here, that was given as a prize in an Olympic event, for example, was simply leaves of some kind that were woven in the form of a circle as a garland and placed upon the head of the victor. That was the prize – the sign of the honor of being the winner.

We have this same word used again in 2 Timothy 4:7-8: I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown (a "stephanos) of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day," and so on. So this was a symbol, first of all, of triumph in some contest in the games as a victory, and as being the winner.

It was also used to crown guests at a banquet, and it would connote a sense of festival joy. It was used to honor someone who had performed distinguished service, such as someone who had achieved a great military victory. As he would come back from the wars, he would be met in the parade, and he would be crowned with a "stephanos" crown, a crown of victory. Guests at a banquet were given these crowns because it was a happy occasion. The "stephanos" crown, made of leaves woven together in a circle and placed upon the head, was a victory wreath.

This word is the same word, incidentally, which is used, but in a way of ridicule, of the crown of thorns which were placed on the head of Jesus. We have this in Matthew 27:29, Mark 15:17, and John 19:2-5. This is the description of the crown. This is the kind of crown they put on the head of Jesus because it was supposed to be a crown that connoted victory. It connoted honor. So, in other words, they were making fun of Christ as saying, "Here you are, victorious Christ. Here you are, great person that we are honoring." They didn't even use the other word for the other kind of crown, that of a royal person. They deliberately put this kind of crown on Him which represented honor and victory because they viewed Him as such a buffoon in such a terribly pathetically defeated person.

The opposite of the "stephanos" crown is the "diadema" from which, again, you can see we get our English word "diadem." Diadem is the crown that refers to imperial authority. It's the kind of a crown that a king wears to identify his rule and his imperial authority. Paul pictures himself as having been both honored and made happy by the Philippians with a "stephanos" crown of victory on his head.

**Crowns**

Now, the business of crowns is something that we should be concerned with, because each of us is in a position to earn one or more of four basic crowns that the Bible says that God has to offer his people. So let's see if we can learn about those crowns this morning:

1. **The Crown of Joy**

Crown number one is called the crown of joy, or of rejoicing. We have this in Philippians 4:1, the passage that we are studying. It is associated with joy. We also have it in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, where we read, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy." In the context, this crown is associated with believers who are positive to instruction in the Word of God. That's why Paul uses it of the Philippian Christians. He said, "You people are going to enable me someday to have a crown of joy, or a crown of rejoicing. Why? Because of their positive attitude toward the Word of God.

People who are positive to the gospel are saved. Those who go on in doctrine develop spiritual maturity. Then when they get into the Lord's presence, as 1 Thessalonians 2:19 speaks of here in the presence of the Lord Jesus that is coming, they will be greatly rewarded, because of the spiritual maturity that they have developed, and the consequent divine good works which flowed from that spiritual maturity. So those, who are instructed and who respond, bring a crown of joy to those who've been their teachers. The crown of joy is the Lord's recognition that a Christian's divine good service is not in vain. Philippians 2:16 says that our service is not in vain. Much of our service is in vain. There'll be no crown for that at all. But for service which is under the principles of the Word of God, in keeping with doctrine and under the guidance of the Spirit of God, there is going to be a crown of recognition given.

Many congregations, as I've said, are not a crown of joy, but they are a millstone of grief to their pastor-teachers. Part of this is because the pastor-teacher has misdirected the spiritual values of the congregation. Many preachers base their satisfaction, relative to their congregations, on the basis of how much hustling they can get the people of the congregation to do. The result is always unhappiness. So there are Christians who are brainwashed into the idea that what they need, in order to go on spiritually with God and to develop spiritual maturity, is that they have to attend church regularly. They depend for their joy upon how much they read the Bible; how many Scripture passages they memorized; how many tracts they distributed; how many telephone calls they made for the Lord; how many people they witnessed to; or, how much money they gave to the Lord's work.

I sat in a church recently, and I always like to see what they put in their little slots that they have in the pews. So I picked up the offering envelope, and the offering envelope had on it not only the name and so on (the basic information), but then it had a series of places where the person could list how many tracks he gave out; how many phone calls he made; how many people he witnessed to; how much he had read his Bible; and, how much he had prayed. Wouldn't you like it if we got Mr. Cross to print us up a little series of envelopes like that, that each of you could fill out every Sunday morning to give us a full record and accounting of your performance?

I thought, "For one thing, obviously, this poor church doesn't know anything about the privacy of the priesthood of the believer." But worse than that, every time a believer picks up that offering envelope to put his offering in, and then sincerely goes through marking all that gobbledygook on reporting on himself, you know what is in his mind. He's thinking, "This is how I'm going forward and how I'm moving ahead with the Lord. The better my figures on visits and calls and tracks and things I gave out, the better I am in my spiritual life, and the more I've moved ahead. That is deceptive. Those things are all good and proper and right and necessary to do, but they will not move you to spiritual maturity.

However, preachers give their congregations the idea that that's it, rather than making it clear to them that they must feed upon the Word of God; move toward spiritual maturity; build this structure in their soul; and, move on toward the super grace life. Because they do not explain that to their believers, naturally, the believers are not a source of joy to them. After a while, that business of handing out tracts; being sure you witness to so many people; giving this much money, attending church assiduously; and, everything else done in the old sin nature gets to be a drag.

Pretty soon, you find that instead of that flowing out of your spiritual maturity, you're thinking that that's going to build your spiritual maturity, and everything eventually collapses. So the congregation can't do anything but act upon the old sin nature. They have followed a route that gives them no controls over the old sin nature. So pretty soon, you've got a church full of beasts, and beasts snarl at each other; they bark at each other; they bite at each other; and, they claw each other when they're not looking. A congregation which is never fed, and never directed to Bible doctrine as the only source of spiritual maturity, has no possible ground for happiness. So what do you have? Well, the result is that if you could really look into the souls of the average church congregation, you would find that they are just a bunch of spiritually scrawny sheep with a bunch of goats mixed in.

So the first crown of victory is the crown of rejoicing. There's going to be no joy for any pastor-teacher in his congregation if they have not been fed upon the Word of God. There is no joy for you if what you are giving people is hay, wood, and stubble, instead of giving them the genuine food of the Word of God.

1. **The Crown of Righteousness**

A second crown is called the crown of righteousness. If you'll turn to 2 Timothy 4:7-7, you can read about this crown: "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. 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 that love His appearing." A crowd of righteousness is a reward. Again, remember, that these are all rewards. This has nothing to do with eternal life. All of these "stephanos" crowns are victory celebrations. They are honors. They are something you have earned. These are not something that God simply in grace gives you. The crown of righteousness is a crown which is a reward for right living; for acting right as a Christian; for functioning on divine viewpoint in your life on earth; and, for being positive toward all the commandments of grace that we find in the Bible.

Notice that 2 Timothy 4:7 identifies some specific areas of right living. In the case of the apostle Paul, he says, "First of all, I have fought a good fight." This is talking of fighting in spiritual terms. There are a lot of churches who do a lot of good fighting among themselves, and they think they're going to get a crown for that, but they are all going to get crowned instead, when they get into the Lord's presence, for that kind of fighting. But here is a fight that he is referring to, namely of being a good soldier of Jesus Christ in the angelic warfare.

We read about this in Ephesians 6:11-14, where we are told to take on the armor of God. Part of our advanced Bible doctrine course went extensively into a study of the armor of the Christian soldier – what it is and how to use it. Paul said, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (demon forces of various kinds), against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand, fighting the good fight as a soldier of Jesus Christ."

In 2 Timothy 2:3-5, we have the same idea: "Therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully." So first of all, the image here that the apostle Paul is conveying, of securing the crown of righteousness (right living), includes fighting as a good soldier of Jesus Christ in the angelic conflict. This means not going AWOL. Most Christians, if they really tried to fight in the angelic conflict, would be slaughtered right off the bat. They don't know the first thing about putting on the armor of God. Those who don't have the heart to (or haven't been egged to get into the fight) simply fall out of it altogether. They're just AWOL. There's another image that may be involved in this idea of fighting, and that's athletic contest in the arena. The contestant (the athlete) has done his very best. Here we have the picture of God's servant who has done his very best.

The second point we notice is that he says that, "He has finished his course" in 2 Timothy 4:7, as another expression of earning the crown of righteousness; that is, fulfilling the plans of service that God has for your particular life. In Ephesians 2:10 we read, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." That is the picture of a runner who is going on to the finish line. He's not dropping out. Here is the picture of a Christian who is taking hold of what God has planned for him in the way of divine good works. He's not dropping out. He's going right on down to the finish line. When he gets down to the finish line, he's gasping for breath; he's exhausted; and, he's shot-through, but he ran, and he finished the course. He did not stop halfway around. Paul is not a spiritual dropout, and God gives this crown to those who follow all the way around the course.

The third thing he says is that he has kept the faith. This refers to positive volition to Bible doctrine as the body of revealed truth. This is what James 1:22 refers to when it says, "Be not only hearers, but be doers of the Word." So Paul obeyed the rules of the Christian life. Paul obeyed the rules of the grace life. We have hundreds of commandments to Christians under grace, and he obeyed them. Paul also refers in many places to his defense of sound doctrine. That's how he kept the faith (1 Timothy 4:16, Titus 1:9, 1 Peter 3:15). Again and again, the apostle Paul refers to his defense of sound doctrine.

So the victory crown award awaits every believer who's ready to exploit the potential that he has for godliness through doctrine. In other words, every one of us is capable of going into heaven and finding the crown of righteousness awaiting for us. There is a special crown for the Christian who has logged a maximum amount of time in the status of spirituality. There is none for the Christian who has logged the maximum amount of time in carnality. That's the difference. The more time you spend out of the inner circle of spirituality, the less your opportunity will be to secure the crown of righteousness. Those who spend most of their time here in the inner circle of temporal fellowship are those who are going to earn the crown of righteousness.

So in heaven, it's going to be quite obvious exactly who the Christians were who spent their lives in a state of confessed known sin, and in the status of spirituality – who the Christians were that really lived righteously. These are not ones who put on fronts; not who conned us with their words; and, not who kidded us by their works, but those who were really functioning on divine good production. That's what this is for. This is for the believer who functions on divine good production. This is for the believer who is really living by the rules.

1. **The Crown of Life**

There is another crown, and that is the crown of life. We have this in James 1:12, first of all, where we read, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him." We also have it in the last book of the Bible. Revelation 2:10 refers to the crown of life: "Fear none of those things which you shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

This is really a magnificent crown. This is one you should really pursue with a vengeance. It is associated in these verses with being a reward for resisting temptation and for enduring trials. It is a reward for meeting temptation with the capacity that God has given you. 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us about that capacity where the grace of God comes through in order for us to be able to meet the temptations and the trials: "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able, but with the temptation also make the way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" – to be victorious in suffering because you have spiritual capacity. We have this described for us.

The apostle Paul gave us a splendid example of that in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10: "He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasures (and here are the five facets of the spiritual maturity structure) in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Stability in the face of sin is the point. For this, God gives a crown of life. Exactly who in the world among Christians is going to have this kind of capacity for life? That's what we're talking about. God gives a special crown to believers who have a capacity for living. Now, you're a believer. You have a capacity for living. How do you get it if you don't have it? This refers to what John 10:10 describes as "the abundant Christian life:" "The Lord Jesus came to give us life, and to give it to us more abundantly." What is it referring to? It is referring to moving on up; completing your spiritual maturity structure; and, going on to super grace. Only here does a believer have the capacity for living. James 4:6 tells us that for, Christians who have gone on to spiritual maturity, God gives more grace. This is the key verse on the super grace life. Only these Christians, who are at this level, can really live life with capacity.

Bible doctrine is the thing that gives you capacity for living – not hustling. It isn't running around. John 6:63 tells us that it is the Word of God that is the word of life. That is the thing that gives you life. The crown of life is going to be put on the head of every believer who walks into heaven with a super grace level of maturity. Some believers are never going to get this crown. Some believers couldn't get it. They simply don't have it in them to get with the Word; to get into study; and, to be positive to the Word in this way. But those who have stayed with learning doctrine; with being positive; with completing spiritual maturity structure in the soul; and, with going on to super grace, they're going to have it.

No Christian can really live life as a believer to the full capacity until he is up at the super grace level. Just think, for example, on the natural realm. Does a child have the capacity for living that an adult has? Just think of all the limitations for life that are on a child. Nobody would say that a child growing up has capacity for life. But suddenly, you come to an adult fully developed mature stage, and then you suddenly have capacity for life. All kinds of privileges; all kinds of opportunities; and, all kinds of activities are now open to you simply because you have grown up as a human being. The same thing is true in the Christian life. Most believers are groveling around down there someplace on the lower end of the scale. They never build a spiritual maturity. They never get up to where God can pour more grace. The spiritual maturity structure is really just a big pot that you build, and then the grace of God pours in, and then it begins flowing over. That's what "more grace" means. It's the super grace level. Now you've got capacity for living.

Incidentally, the word for "living" here is the Greek word "zoe," and "zoe" is life as a principle. It is life as God has it. If you looked this word up in the Greek dictionary, you would see that it says that it represents the highest and the best which believers possess in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a joke when the world claims that it has come alive because it has become such a slave of sin and temptation and trial. God says. "Those of you who really have the capacity for living are going to be able to take trial in your stride. You can take temptation in your stride. You're going to be victorious over sin. When you walk into heaven, I've got a special victor's crown of reward to place upon your head because you are the super grace level Christians." I guarantee you that those marvelous streets of gold in heaven in the New Jerusalem are not going to be walked by many Christians wearing the wreath on their heads of the super grace crown. But it's open to you. It's available to you, providing that you have somebody who is teaching you the Word of God. This is occupation with Christ on the highest level.

1. **The Crown of Glory**

Then there's a fourth crown. This is the crown of glory. This is an exclusive crown. This is not a crown that all Christians have access to. This is the crown which we read about in 1 Peter 5:4: "And when the chief shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that doesn't fade away." This is the crown which is exclusively for pastor-teachers. Only pastor-teachers can secure this particular crown. The way they secure it is by being faithful to their mission as pastor-teachers, which the first part of 1 Peter 5 describes for us: "The elders who are among you (the pastor-teachers who are among you) I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you."

That's the pastor's number one job. Don't go visiting. Don't go chitchatting. Don't be a social butterfly. Don't be obsequious. Don't be scraping. Don't try to convey the idea that you're solicitors. Don't use those con public relation words. Just give the people the Word of God. Explain it to them. Let them know where they're going. Let them know what's in store for them. Let them know what they can accept or reject, and what God's going to do as a consequence. "Feed the flock, taking the oversight of it." Be the administrator. If you don't have command presence, then get out of the ministry. You don't have any business in it.

"Not by constraint." It's not because somebody is forcing you to take on the responsibility, but carry your job as unto the Lord. And you don't do it for money: "Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Don't do it because you're going to calculate what you're going to say to be sure that that person that's in the congregation that's a good financial supporter will not be offended. The minute you do that, I'll guarantee you will never see a pastor-teacher's crown on your head if you are in the ministry. The minute you subject yourself to anybody in the congregation, that crown goes. This does not go to men of dishonor.

This is what God has in the form of the Medal of Honor. In the military service, the highest award for bravery above and beyond the call of duty is the Medal of Honor. The crown of glory is God's Medal of Honor for pastor-teachers, except it is not given to them for going above and beyond the call of duty. It is given to them for going in line with the call of duty.

Verse 3 says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. When the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ comes, the result is going to be to the pastor-teacher communicator who has done his job accordingly, that there will be this particular crown, the crown of glory. Today there is such monumental unfaithfulness among pastoral-teachers, I'm sorry to say, relative to feeding the flock of God and taking the authority that belongs to them in the local church-teaching ministry and administration, that I understand there's a huge surplus of crowns of glory in heaven. The Lord has just given directions to the angels to stop making them because they think they're overstocked. That's unfortunate, but true.

So there are four crowns. I hope that you will pursue the crowns that are available to you, because pursuing them will enable you to enter into what Paul is talking about in Philippians – maximum happiness here on this earth.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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