

## First Thessalonians 2:17

2:1-12 - Paul had been talking about the character of his life and his style of ministry while in Thessalonica

2:13-14 – Paul began to remember how the Thessalonians received the teaching as the Word of God and the results that followed which included character and persecution.

2:14-16 – The mention of persecution led Paul to discuss the Jewish opposition and their punishment.

2:17-3:1-5 – Paul makes three points

- a. Paul feels the pain of being separated from the Thessalonians
- b. Paul credits Satan for having prevented a reunion with the Thessalonians
- c. Paul identifies his alternate course of action taken in order to resolve the conflict and counter Satan's opposition.

3:5 – Paul desired goal was:

- a. To strengthen their faith
- b. To Encourage them

3:6-10 – Paul's report on the alternative plan: Timothy's ministry in Thessalonica

2:17 – **“But we”** is written in contrast to the Jews who had opposed the Truth and oppressed the Thessalonians.

Paul returns to discuss his relationship with the Thessalonians and his desire to see them.

Paul, Silas and Timothy had been forced out of Thessalonica because of a rising movement against them (Acts 17:5-13)

**“torn away”** (“orphaned”) is *aporphanisthentes* and means not only children who had lost their parents, but in the Greek the word also refers to parents who had lost their children and the pain that went with that. This is written in the Greek in reference to Paul and not the Thessalonians. Paul had previously referred to his ministry in Thessalonica as that of a “mother” (2:7) and a “father” (2:11).

**“short time”** had been less than a year, but with no communication that is a long time to wait.

Paul's point to the Thessalonians is that he was forced away and had been forced to stay away.

Paul was not avoiding the Thessalonians. Paul had not forgotten about the Thessalonians.

In fact, Paul says that although they were “absent” they really were not, because the absence was only “in person, not in thought” (or, literally in the Greek: “in face, not in heart”)

The Greek word order in verse 2:17 is this:

“All the more eagerly we made every effort your faces to see with great longing.”

The two key phrases being:

- a. “All the more eagerly”
- b. “with great longing”

Paul wanted “to see your faces.”

**2:18** – “For” indicates that Paul is going to tell them why he wanted to see their faces, but this is interrupted in Paul's thoughts and is restated again in 2:19 with “For”.

Paul says he wanted to visit them “again and again” (Greek “both once and twice”)

The reason for Paul's failure to arrive is simply blamed on Satan.

We do not know how many times Paul tried to come to Thessalonica.

We do not know what kind of hindrances kept him from coming.

But, we do know this from the text:

- a. Paul's desire and efforts to come to Thessalonica were so strong that it took angelic opposition to prevent his human efforts from succeeding. (This is more than a figure of speech that Paul flippantly threw out there. Paul experienced satanic opposition.)
- b. The word **“stopped”** (*egkopto*) in the phrase “Satan stopped us” is a military term that basic meaning is “to cut in.” It originally referred to breaking up a road to make it impassable. It

developed in use to refer to breaking through the enemy's line or cutting in on someone's lane during a race (or an interference call in sports!).

2:19 – “For” resumes Paul's explanation concerning why he wanted to see their faces.

## **Crowns in Scripture**

### **Stephanos**

The “stephanos” (στέφανος) the victors crown. It is the symbol of victory given to the winners in the Greek games or a contest. It is a reward or a prize. It is used in 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 2:5

The “stephanos” is also used as an ornament for festivities and celebrations in these verses:

Proverbs 1:9; Proverbs 4:9; Song of Solomon 3:11; Isaiah 28:1

The “stephanos” was also used to honor someone publicly who had distinguished themselves in service or given to someone for their worthiness. These were worn at the parousia (advent or return) of kings.

### **Diadema**

The “diadema” (διαδέμα) was the kingly crown. It is the crown worn by nobility who were possessor of a royal position. This was often obtained by birth or rightful inheritance.

## **Ranking of the Crowns**

There are five crowns mentioned in scripture. They deal with different aspects of the Christian life. The crowns reflect levels of maturity in regards to a believers growth and accomplishments of service to the Lord. They are placed here in a possible list in the order that they could be obtained by the believer.

1. **Incorruptible Crown** (1 Cor. 9:25) - this crown would be the first level a believer would attain to. This crown indicates mastery over the sin nature. The Corinthians are being urged to run the Christian life in such a way as to receive the reward in the end. Here the emphasis is in self-control.

“They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever...I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

  - a. Paul is focusing the believers on running the race or living the life God has given them to compete in.
  - b. Just as each life has a race, each life has a reward available.
  - c. Only those who run the race and run it according to the rules will get a prize.
  - d. The crown or stephanos would wither and sometimes was withered (either of pine or celery see “1 Cor., NICNT, Fee”) at the time of the victory but it meant fame, prestige and fortune. The symbol of victory would fade but the fame was more enduring.
  - e. Paul does not run aimlessly (9:26), meaning he does not live his Christian life with out purpose or direction. Nor should we if we want to achieve what has been made available to us. Consider someone who enters a race not knowing the distance or direction.
  - f. The boxer failing to land a blow is ridiculous and pointless. It is an analogy of the undisciplined believer missing his purpose.
2. **Crown of Righteousness** (2 Timothy 4:7-8) - The second level of crowns goes to those who live righteously in this world while they look forward to Christ's return. They are those who are not captivated by this world, but hunger and thirst after righteousness.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 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.”

- a. This is a crown for righteous behavior and an upright life
- b. “have longed” is in the perfect tense suggests those who greatly anticipated Christ’s return in the past and continued to do so up until the moment of the rewarding.
- c. This life is describe by Paul to Titus in Titus 2:12,13: “[The grace] teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”
- d. “fought” is the word **agonizomai** and though it can refer to a military fight, it is clearly a reference to training and competing in athletics:
  - i. It is the same word translated “competes in the games” in 1 Corinthians 9:25
  - ii. “make every effort” in Luke 13:24
  - iii. “struggling” in Colossians 1:29
  - iv. “wrestling” in Colossians 4:12
  - v. “strive” in 1 Timothy 4:10
  - vi. “fight” in 1 Timothy 6:12
  - vii. “race” is the noun form in Hebrews 12:1
- e. Notice: The same awards awaits all who qualify.
- f. Notice the “fight” (or, the agony of training and competing comes first, and then the successful “finish” of the race. The believer can think they will achieve victory without the struggle of preparing for and demonstrating righteousness.

3. **Crown of Life** ( James 1:12; Revelation 2:10) - The third level to attain to is to proceed in God’s plan for your life while enduring trials. The believer who moves forward in God’s call and assignment in the face of difficulty, even martyrdom, will receive this crown. “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

*“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*

- a. Testing and trials are part of the Christian life. It should be understood that when faced with test and trials many Christians turn back and do not continue on the path God has called them to run on.
- b. Jesus said we would have trouble: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
- c. “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.” (John 15:18)
- d. Paul writes to Timothy, “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” 2 Timothy 3:10,11,12)
- e. The doorway to the next level towards fulfilling God’s plan is to endure hardships and persecution.
- f. The reward is for “persevering” and remaining “faithful”. The reward is not given for having great faith and getting delivered from the trial or test.
- g. We are faithful to the Lord in the trial. The Lord is faithful to reward us for enduring the trial.

4. **Crown of Joy** (Philippians 4:1; 1 Thess.2:19) - This crown is for those who lead others to Christ or demonstrate fruitfulness by influencing others towards righteousness.

*“Therefore, my brother, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!” “For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”*

- a. Rewards are not just for how we live and what we do, they are also for the influence we have on how others live and what they do.
- b. It was being said in Thessalonica that Paul did not really care for the Thessalonians, but Paul said he did, and it should be obvious, since they will result in a crown for him if they succeed.
- c. Gabriel tells Daniel in Daniel 12:3, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

5. **Crown of Glory** (1 Peter 5:4) - The greatest achievement is to fulfill your calling and finish the work God gave you to do. The scripture reference is speaking to pastors who finish their work faithfully, but this crown is not only for pastors. It is for anyone who finds and fulfills their assignment God has given them.

*“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder. . . One who will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care. . .and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”*

- a. Again we see the rewards being given upon Christ’s return. Here Christ is seen as the Chief Shepherd paying his workers that he contracted out labor to shepherd for him.
- b. Earthly crowns or **stephanos** we made of vines, etc. This crown is made out of Glory! (Isaiah 28:5)
- c. Just like Paul’s crown in 2 Timothy 4:7,8 was available to “ALL who long for Christ’s appearing,” this crown is also available to all who serve at the position and with the capacity they were given. It is not just the office of pastor, although that is the context of the verse. The application extends to all believers who become what God has created them to be and they serve him in that position.

### **Review of Crowns:**

1. Incorruptible Crown for mastery over the sin nature.
2. Crown of Righteousness for living righteously in this world.
3. Crown of Live for enduring trials while proceeding in God’s plan.
4. Crown of Joy for leading others to Christ and in righteousness.
5. Crown of Glory for fulfilling your calling and finishing the work assigned.

2:20

3:1

3:2

3:3

3:4

3:5

3:6

3:7

3:8

3:9

3:10