
Overview of Gift, Inheritance, Reward, and Crown

Gift

One gift from God is communicated in the following verse.

Ephesians 2:8 and 9

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift** of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

This gift of God is being **saved** by grace through faith—not a result of works.¹ A person being saved through, or based on, their faith in God is a demonstration of God’s grace—it is not merited; it is not earned—being **saved** is a gift.

Not only is the gift of being saved not earned, but it is also not deserved.

Romans 5:8

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were **still sinners**, Christ died for us.

No one deserves to be saved since all are sinners. It is Christ’s humiliation, suffering, and death that made the necessary legal “payment” for sin since he was not a sinner but accepted a sinner’s death. The price for sin having been paid, another gift became available.

Romans 5:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ For if by the transgression of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of **the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Righteousness is a gift. The following describes how a person can receive this gift.

Romans 4:5

⁵ And to the one who does not work but **believes in him** [God] who justifies [*dikaioó*—declares righteous] the **ungodly**, his **faith is counted as righteousness** [*dikaiousuné*],

Faith in God and the accomplishment of His son results in being declared legally righteous by God. It is important to note that being **declared righteous** and receiving **the gift of righteousness** is distinct from a person being inherently righteous, i.e., always thinking and acting righteously. This gift of righteousness is a legal state or standing granted by God.

dikaioó (verb 39x)—primarily means to **declare or pronounce someone as righteous**. In a legal sense, it refers to the act of acquitting or vindicating someone, declaring them free from guilt² or blame. In the New Testament, it is often used in the context of God’s act of declaring a sinner righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. This justification is not based on the individual’s own merit but on the righteousness of Christ imputed to them.

¹ The words faith, trust, or believing could be used in this context. These three may have different meanings to different people depending on background. The essence of the thought that binds them together in this context is an acknowledgment and acceptance of information to the point that acceptance results in a positive action (not necessarily a physical action but could just be a change in thinking). This would be contrasted with simple mental assent, which is acknowledgment and perhaps acceptance but no real change.

² This is guilt in a legal sense not in an emotional sense.

It is perhaps important to note that the gift of righteousness which comes by faith in God and Christ is not a material thing—it is a legal standing before God. It is as if God says to the person who believes, “I, God, declare you righteous.” In this era, this declaration of righteousness is based on the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord.³ This acceptance of Jesus Christ is described in the following verses.

Romans 10:9 and 10 (NASB)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in **righteousness** [*dikaiosuné*], and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.⁴

In these verses, righteousness results in salvation—both are gifts. Salvation in this context refers to being saved from death, that is, having the promise of life in the age(s) to come.⁵ This life in the age(s) to come will not be the same as one’s life in this age.

For those who accept Jesus as lord and believe he was raised from the dead, being saved *from death* in the future is a “done deal” because it is based on Christ’s accomplishment and God’s validation of his accomplishment in raising him from the dead.⁶ **Literally** being saved from death, which is to be saved from being mortal, means becoming immortal. This change from mortal to immortal is described in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:51–53 (NASB)

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep,⁷ but we will all be **changed**, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be **changed**.⁵³ For this **perishable** [a reference to the dead] must put on the **imperishable**, and this **mortal** [a reference to the living] must put on **immortality**.

This change (the perishable to the imperishable and the mortal to the immortal) is something that will **happen to** those who have believed on Christ. No person can change themselves in the way described here—this life, this immortality, is a **gift from God**.

This promised change is guaranteed by receipt of **the gift of holy spirit** when a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. (The following verses are cited from the REV.⁸)

Acts 2:38

³⁸ And Peter *said* to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive **the gift of the holy spirit**.”

³ *kurios* (n. 722x)—someone who possesses authority, control, or power; includes the idea of master or owner.

⁴ Note that this is not a “formula” for salvation as if to say, “You have to do exactly this.” The basic point is the acknowledgment, recognition, and acceptance of the truth that Jesus is alive. Actually accepting Jesus as one’s master and/or owner (because he “paid the price”) may well come later as a person learns more about Jesus and what was accomplished by his life, death, and resurrection.

⁵ Age(s) because the Millennial Kingdom of 1000 years will be one “age” and the new heaven and earth will be another “age.”

⁶ It is worth noting that demons believe but they do not accept Jesus Christ **as Lord** [see [James 2:19](#)].

⁷ Some who have believed on the Lord Jesus will be alive when Christ returns.

⁸ <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com>. We agree with the REV that holy spirit in these contexts is a gift of spirit. For more detail see Appendix 7 in the REV available here: <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Appendix/7/bb>. We also encourage readers to explore the commentary on each of these verses.

Acts 10:45

⁴⁵ And the believers from among the Circumcised were amazed, all those who came with Peter, because on the Gentiles also **the gift of the holy spirit** was poured out.

This gift is not a material, tangible thing. It is a spiritual “thing” in the sense that God and angels are real “things” though intangible. This gift of holy spirit was promised throughout the O.T. and Jesus Christ promised it to his followers.

Acts 1:4 and 5

⁴ And being assembled together with them, he [Jesus] commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for **the promise of the Father**, which, he said, “you heard about from me, ⁵ because John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with **holy spirit** not many days from now.”

Receipt of this gift is, at least in part, a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that in him all families on earth would be blessed [see [Genesis 12:3](#); [Acts 3:25](#)]. This blessing is highlighted in Galatians.

Galatians 3:8 and 14

⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be **blessed.**” ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the **blessing of Abraham** [being declared righteous] could come to the Gentiles, *and* so that through **trust** [in God and Christ] we could receive **the spirit that was promised.**⁹

In summary, the gift of salvation, i.e., life in the age(s) to come, is only possible because of the gift of righteousness through faith in God who declares the sinner righteous. Being considered righteous is required in order to have a vital relationship with God because He is righteous. In this era, a person is declared righteous based on the acceptance of Christ’s work and God’s validation of that work through his resurrection. Then, the gift of holy spirit is received as the confirmation and the guarantee of that righteousness now and the promise of being changed in the future.¹⁰

Inheritance

This gift of holy spirit is referred to as a “down payment” of a future inheritance.

Ephesians 1:13 and 14 (REV)

In *union with* him [Christ] you also, when you heard the message of truth—the good news of your salvation—and when you believed in him, were marked with a seal—the promised holy spirit—which is the **down payment** of our **inheritance**, until *our* redemption as *God’s own* possession, to the praise of His glory.¹¹

In the broadest sense, the “inheritance” is **life** in the age(s) to come—also described here as redemption, which involves being changed from mortal to immortal. The spirit-gift is a “down payment” of that inheritance of life. The realization of this “inheritance” will be the ultimate fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed.¹²

⁹ A “gift” of spirit was spoken of throughout the OT. This could also refer specifically to Jesus promising a “helper.”

¹⁰ This includes the possibility of living “free from sin” in the here-and-now.

¹¹ There are varying opinions on how to translate and understand these verses.

¹² There were several promises made by God to Abraham. This one is highlighted in Galatians 3:8. Peter brought this same promise forward during his preaching in Acts 3:25. This is a promise kept by God.

Genesis 12:3b [God speaking to Abraham]

³ ... in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The key word here is blessed. The primary way in which God blessed Abraham was in God announcing that He reckoned Abraham **righteous** based on his **faith** (trust, believing). That righteousness will result in life in the age(s) to come.

Jesus referred to this life in the age to come when he will be king.

Matthew 25:33 and 34

³³ And he [the King] will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are **blessed** by my Father, **inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

The ones who are “blessed” are the ones considered righteous. The “kingdom” is a place characterized by righteousness. Jesus provides more detail a little later.

Matthew 25:46

⁴⁶ And these [the unrighteous—the goats] will go away into eternal punishment [punishment in the age to come], but the righteous [the sheep] into eternal life [life in the age to come¹³].”

The Greek word typically translated as “inheritance” [*kléronomia*¹⁴] primarily refers to **life in the age(s) to come**, which includes access to the Millennial Kingdom where Christ will rule as king for 1000 years and the ultimate new heaven and earth when God will rule and live with the righteous on earth. This inheritance of life in the age(s) to come is the promise of a higher quality of life. The following provides some insight into the quality of that life.

Galatians 5:22 and 23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit [the spirit-gift] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the spirit are qualities of God and Christ and provide a glimpse into what life will be like in the coming age(s). In the coming ages, righteousness will be the dominant characteristic, not unrighteousness as is the case now.

Another way this inheritance can be described is “blessed with every spiritual blessing.”

Ephesians 1:3 and 4

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

It does not say “material blessings” but “spiritual blessings.” Things like righteousness, holiness, blamelessness, peace, love, joy, etc. are spiritual blessings. In the O.T., material blessings, like land, were important for various reasons, but the greatest blessings are spiritual.

¹³ “Eternal life” is the typical translation of the Greek words *zōé aiónios*, literally, life-age or, in standard English, age (adjective) – life (noun). While duration is an aspect of the expression, the quality of life is significant. This can be seen in John 17:3, “And this is eternal life [*zōé aiónios*], that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” We have chosen to express this two-word phrase as “life in the age(s) to come.” “Age” as an adjective implies the qualities or characteristics of a time period. In the case of “eternal life,” the underlying sense is an “age” characterized by righteousness since long-term life requires righteousness.

¹⁴ There are seven *kler-* words that include other nouns plus verbs.

This inheritance can be “enjoyed” in the present through appropriating the gift of holy spirit, which can be seen as a part or portion of that future inheritance. In the vernacular, we might say, “You can get a ‘taste’ of the future inheritance now through appropriating this spirit-gift.” This spirit provides enablements that can be accessed or appropriated through faith/believing, e.g., knowledge, wisdom, as well as fruit of the spirit. Appropriating this spirit is encouraged in statements like “walk by the spirit.” In this sense, a person can appropriate now, at least in part, the inheritance that is promised in the future.

What is implied in the promise of an inheritance is a “place” in the coming kingdoms of Christ and God. What has also been promised is a “new heart,” which implies being inherently righteous as Christ is today...those who believe will be like him as promised in scripture [[1 John 3:2](#); [Philippians 3:20 and 21](#)]. The spirit-gift can provide a personal foreshadow of this coming reality. This future inheritance also promises direct access to Christ and God...in the new heaven and earth God will dwell with His people [[Revelation 21:3](#)]. The full realization of this gift of life is coming in the future [[1 Corinthians 15:51](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)]. As God’s promise to Abraham has come to pass through Christ, just as sure is the promise of life in the age(s) to come.

The following is provided for further exploration.

These are the occurrences of the noun “inheritance” [*kléronomia*] in the Pauline Epistles: [Galatians 3:18](#); Ephesians [1:11](#), [14](#), [18](#); [5:5](#)¹⁵; Colossians [3:24](#)¹⁶.

These are the occurrences of the verb “inherit” [*kléronomeó*] in the Pauline Epistles: 1 Corinthians [6:9](#), [10](#); [15:50](#) (2x); Galatians [4:30](#); [5:21](#).

These are the occurrences of the noun “heir” [*kléronomos*] in the Pauline Epistles: Romans [4:13](#), [14](#); [8:17](#) (2x); Galatians [3:29](#); [4:1](#), [7](#).

“inheritance” in Colossians [1:12](#) is *kléros*.

The verb *kléroó* occurs only in [Ephesians 1:11](#).

In summary: believers inherit the kingdom of God; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (a change to imperishable and immortal is necessary); believers are heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ; the promise to Abraham and his seed is that they will be heirs of the world; believers are considered as God’s inheritance.

What individuals do with God’s grace and His gifts is a different matter. This is where rewards come into the picture.

Reward

God is just and Scripture repeatedly declares that there will be a reckoning for personal behavior.

Jeremiah 17:10

¹⁰ “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give [*nathan*] every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Some say this verse and Galatians 5:21 refer to unbelievers who will literally not inherit the kingdom of God while others say this refers to Christians who will not receive an inheritance. We believe the message is this: “Why would you want to live like the unrighteous who have no inheritance in the ages to come?”

¹⁶ “Reward” is the Greek word *antapodosis*, which is not the typical Greek word translated as “reward.”

¹⁷ For an interesting note on “heart” and “mind” see the REV commentary [here](#). Also, note “fruit of his deeds” not just “deeds.”

Psalm 62:12b

¹² ... For you **will render** [*shalam*] **to a man according to his work.**

See also [Jeremiah 32:19](#) (“rewarding” = *nathan*); [Proverbs 24:12](#) (“repay” = *shub*); [Ezekiel 33:20](#) (“judge” = *shaphat*).

This truth is repeated in the N.T.

Romans 2:6

⁶ He [God] **will render** [*apodidómi*] **to each one according to his works:**

These verses do not distinguish between good and evil; they simply communicate that there will be a “reckoning” or “rendering” according to each person’s work.

With respect to this era of grace, which will end when Christ returns, every person who has believed on him will appear before him (whether dead or alive) and receive what is due for what was done.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may **receive what is due** [*komizó*] for what he has done in the body, **whether good or evil.**

(Berean Literal)

For we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may **receive back** [*komizó*] the things *done* through the body according to what he did, whether good or evil.

It is important to note that this says, “whether good or evil.”

What exactly “receiving back” entails is not specifically described. In the excerpts below, Jesus indicates varying rewards based on actions.¹⁸

Matthew 25:21, 23, 28, and 29

²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little [5 talents]; I will set you [*kathistémi*] over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ... ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little [2 talents]; I will set you [*kathistémi*] over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ... ²⁸ So take the talent from him [1 talent] and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has [*been a good steward*] will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not [*been a good steward*], even what he has will be taken away.

“I will set you” [*kathistémi*] can carry the sense of “put you in charge,” that is, give you a certain position of authority and responsibility.

This ultimate reckoning is addressed with respect to Christians in the following verses.

1 Corinthians 3:10–15

¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of **work** each one has done. ¹⁴ **If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he**

¹⁸ This parable relates to the coming kingdom of the Messiah.

will receive a reward [*misthos*].¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss [*zémioó*], though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

These verses make it clear that there will be a "reward" for works "built on Jesus Christ." In v. 12, the first three items can withstand fire; the second three are consumed by fire. If the works survive the "fire test," the person will be rewarded. If the works do not survive the test, the person will not receive a reward. The person themselves will still be saved, enjoying life in the age(s) to come, but they will have suffered loss.¹⁹ The nature of the rewards to be received for "good work" is not specified.

The following verse speaks specifically about doing wrong.

1 Thessalonian 4:6

⁶ that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because **the Lord is an avenger** in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

The context here is about sexual immorality (v. 3) but it obviously applies to any activity that "transgresses" [*huperbainó*] or "wrongs" [*pleonekteó*] a brother or sister, i.e., a member of the body of Christ. In the final reckoning, there will be a distinction between those who have accepted Christ and done wrong and those who have rejected Christ and done wrong. The former group will have their works tested by fire; the latter group will experience judgment and the "lake of fire" described in Revelation 20 and 21.

The word that is translated most frequently as "reward" is *misthos*. The following provides some additional detail concerning this word.

misthos (n.)—pay for service (literally or figuratively), good or bad—hire, reward, wages. In the Greco-Roman world, the concept of "misthos" was well understood in the context of labor and compensation. Workers were paid wages for their services, and this economic principle was easily translatable into spiritual teachings.²⁰

These are some examples.

Matthew 6:1–5

¹ "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have **no reward** [*misthos*] from your Father who is in heaven. ² "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be **praised by others**. Truly, I say to you, they have received their **reward** [*misthos*]. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will **reward** [*apodidómi*] you. ⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their **reward** [*misthos*].

One way to understand "reward" in this context is that the person doing what glorifies God will receive glory from God. The person doing what glorifies themselves before others receives the glory of others.

Matthew 10:41 and 42

⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's **reward** [*misthos*], and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a

¹⁹ See Ezekiel 44:10–16 regarding rewards (or lack thereof). This could perhaps be extrapolated to Christians in the sense of who gets to be close to Christ and who does not get to be close to Christ.

²⁰ <https://biblehub.com/greek/3408.htm>.

righteous person's reward [*misthos*].⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward [*misthos*]."

In this context, a prophet will not necessarily receive a "greater reward" than someone who is not a prophet. The act or service of either is considered on an equal plane in the sense that God is not a respecter of persons. Again, the exact nature of the "reward" is not specified in these contexts, however, what is implied is recognition or glory.

Luke 6:22 and 23

²² "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward [*misthos*] is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

In this context, those who have "suffered on account of the Son of Man" will receive a "great reward." Again, the nature of the reward is not specified; however, this promise gives hope of receiving great "good" for those who have suffered unjustly—innocent victims might be included in this category.

Luke 6:35

³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward [*misthos*] will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

In this context, going above and beyond what is "normal" in terms of love, care, and attitude is worthy of a "great reward." Again, the nature of the reward is not specified only that it will be "great."

All these examples present "rewards" in a spiritual or non-material context that has more to do with the attitude or intent behind an action than the action itself or any immediate material benefit.

The following section points to efforts in the furtherance of the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 3:7 and 8

⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages [*misthos*] (NASB: reward) according to his labor.

It is clear that there will be recompense or compensation and it can vary but the nature of that compensation is not specified.

2 Peter 2:12 and 13

¹² But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wage [*misthos*] for their wrongdoing.

The nature of the "suffering wrong" is not specified. There are certainly examples of the unrighteous being eliminated through water (Noah's flood) or fire (Sodom and Gomorrah, the "lake of fire") or the earth opening up (Korah, Dathan, and Abiram). Whether there is some other form of punishment is not revealed.

So, while it is clear that there will ultimately be a reckoning for good and evil, there are no specifics provided in the immediate context of "rewards." Generally, Scripture implies that good will be "rewarded" with recognition and glory from Christ and God and evil will be "rewarded" with extinction. There are other records that perhaps imply some detail regarding the nature of "rewards." For example, when two of Jesus' apostles requested to be on his right hand and left hand in his kingdom, Jesus did not deny that such positions would exist but that it was not his decision to appoint such positions.

Seated at Christ's right hand and left hand implies authority and/or responsibility. This can be coupled with the fact that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, which is a position of both honor and authority given to him by God because of his sacrifice. There is also the record that states that the saints will judge angels, which is also a type of authority. So, degrees of authority and/or responsibility are implied in these records. Also, in the O.T., there are records that describe a variety of jobs or responsibilities during the period of the Millennial Kingdom [Isaiah 65:21–23; Amos 9:13–14; and others]. Another way to view these records is that they communicate degrees of access or closeness to Christ and God.

Crown/Wreath

There are five “crowns” generally acknowledged in the N.T. The Greek word translated as “crown” is *stephanos*. Since Paul uses athletic metaphors in conjunction with the word, perhaps it might be better translated as “wreath.” Wreaths were presented to winners in the ancient games or to victors in battle. In the context of the N.T., these wreaths are to be given in the future based on a godly or righteous lifestyle. These wreaths never occur in conjunction with the word “reward.” If there is a distinction to be made between the two, a “reward” is associated with more specific godly actions, whereas a “wreath” is associated with a godly lifestyle.

Following are a couple of examples concerning “reward.”

1 Corinthians 3:8 and 14 (NASB)

⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own **reward** according to **his own labor**. ... ¹⁴ If any man's **work** which he has built on it remains, he will receive a **reward**.

Luke 6:35

³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your **reward** will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Love your enemies, do good, and lend are specific godly actions that warrant reward.

Following are a couple of examples concerning “wreaths.”

1 Corinthians 9:25 and 27

²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control **in all things**. They do it to receive a perishable **wreath**, but we an imperishable. ... ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

2 Timothy 4:7 and 8

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown [wreath] 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 loved his appearing.

Being a competitive athlete requires a complete lifestyle, not just a specific action or set of actions. In the context of an athlete, a wreath is not compensation or recompense but **recognition** of successful effort akin to an Olympic athlete receiving a gold medal. The medal is technically not a “reward” but an **honor**—a moment of public recognition. There may be “rewards” in the form of compensation associated with the victory, e.g., money, endorsements, etc., but the medal itself is simply a symbol in recognition of excellence. In our culture a victor's wreath could be likened to a “Lifetime Achievement Award” or being a Kennedy Center Honoree. In any case, in this context, a victor's wreath is a symbol, which is obviously metaphorical, i.e., not literal.

Perhaps the following definitions might serve to provide a distinction between rewards and wreaths.

A **reward** is something given in return for a specific action, behavior, or effort, often as an incentive or compensation (e.g., a cash bonus for good performance or a treat for completing a task). It's usually more immediate and tied to a specific outcome.

An **award** (like a victor's wreath) is formal **recognition** given for achievement, merit, or excellence, often in a competitive or judged context. It typically involves a ceremony or public acknowledgment and may or may not include a tangible benefit.

The victor's wreath goes to a person who will have "finished the race"—successfully lived righteously and faithfully to the end of their life. They may not have started out that way or perhaps veered off the righteous path for a while, but on the whole and to the end they exemplified a righteous, godly life. This is the sort of life that glorifies God and warrants being awarded glory and honor from God.

The following verse is an example of what it takes to receive a wreath.

Hebrews 2:9

⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, **crowned with glory and honor** because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

The word "crowned" is the verb form of [stephanos](#).

See also...

Revelation 5:12

¹² ... "**Worthy** is the Lamb who was slain [Jesus], to receive **power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!**"

Putting these two verses together indicates that sacrificing oneself to carry out God's plan is worthy of being "crowned," i.e., honored and glorified by God. The concept of a worthy life is mentioned in several N.T. scriptures.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

¹² we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to **walk in a manner worthy** [[axiós](#)] of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Ephesians 4:1b

¹ [I] urge you to **walk in a manner worthy** [[axiós](#)] of the calling to which you have been called

Philippians 1:27a

²⁷ Only let your **manner of life be worthy** [[axiós](#)] of the gospel of Christ

Colossians 1:10a

¹⁰ so as to **walk in a manner worthy** [[axiós](#)] of the Lord, fully pleasing to him

An example of a "worthy walk" is detailed in the contexts in which "wreath" occurs. A "worthy walk" can be described as the life of a true, genuine disciple of Christ.

Another way this can be expressed is as follows.

Philippians 3:14

¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize [[brabeion](#)] of the **upward call** of God in Christ Jesus.

A worthy life is a life that has responded to the upward call of God. All who are saved have been called, but beyond that call to salvation is an upward call to spiritual maturity and becoming Christ-like.

Another way this worthy life is described is in Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:1

¹Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children.

Being an imitator of God is living a worthy life.

There are concepts associated with each of the wreaths presented in the N.T. that can be seen as an outline for what a believer needs to do in order to “walk worthy” and be “crowned” with honor and glory and blessing at Christ’s appearing. The fact that there are concepts shared between the wreaths indicates that the wreaths should be taken together as a whole and not as standalone honors; as if each is associated with a separate “competition.”

Following are the wreaths identified in the N.T. and very brief summaries of the context surrounding each.

1 Corinthians 9:25 (“imperishable”) highlights exercising self-control. This is presented in an athletic metaphor, namely, the athlete who would be successful controls himself, disciplines himself. Also, if the competition is a foot race, the athlete must finish the race in order to receive a victor’s wreath. Self-control is identified in Galatians 5 as a fruit of the spirit-gift.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 (“rejoicing” or “boasting”) highlights an attitude of pride in both “winning” people to the Lord as well as being involved in their development to spiritual maturity. This is a demonstration of the love of God. Again, love and joy are identified in Galatians 5 as fruit of the spirit-gift.

2 Timothy 4:8 (“righteousness”) highlights righteousness. As mentioned previously, righteousness as a legal standing is granted as a gift by God to any person who accepts Jesus as the risen Savior, Redeemer, or Lord. However, righteousness also refers to a way of life, that is, living out the righteousness that has been granted. In the immediate context, Paul says, “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.” This indicates he was both engaged in the spiritual battle and that he stayed with it to the end of his life. Faithfulness and goodness are also fruit of the spirit-gift.²¹

James 1:12 (“life”) highlights remaining steadfast under trials and temptations. This is similar to the self-control highlighted in 1 Corinthians 9:25; however, this section highlights external forces that would discourage or deter a worthy walk. This is a life lived to the glory of God even to death if necessary (consider Stephen, Paul, and Peter who all died as martyrs). This particular victor’s wreath will honor a life that demonstrated true life and fortitude. Patience and peace are also fruit of the spirit-gift.

1 Peter 5:4 (“glory”) highlights being a good steward with respect to God’s people—caring for God’s people as God would care for them. The immediate context points to “elders” but the same sense of care and concern for members of the body of Christ is an upward call for all believers. This victor’s wreath is characterized as unfading, similar to the imperishable victor’s wreath in 1 Corinthians 9. Fruit of the spirit-gift includes gentleness, kindness, etc.

The victor’s wreath can be seen as a metaphor for glory and honor and blessing from God. This glory and honor and blessing can be contrasted with the glory and honor and blessing that the world provides which is temporary, decays, and dies. In general, the victor’s wreath is associated with a genuine God-like, Christ-like, life lived.

²¹ Note the choice of the ESV to use the word “award” in this verse.