

## Cross Bearers and Crown Wearers; James 1:12

### I. Steadfast

- A. To maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition, stand one's ground, hold out, endure <sup>1</sup>
- B. This can seem awfully hard in the face of extreme trials
- C. We all know those who have not stood their ground, have not remained true, have not endured in the face of opposition
- D. Truitt Adair, in his keynote at the Sunset Vision Workshop said, "There will be no crown wearers in Heaven that were not cross bearers on Earth."
- E. James 1:12 (ESV); Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

### II. Take Up Your Cross

- A. Matthew 16:24–28 (ESV); <sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. <sup>28</sup> Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."
- B. To deny or die to yourself
  1. "Self-denial does not imply self-abuse or lack of self-esteem. As Jesus' disciples believers should have a better self-image than any other people, but it should be based on God's grace and not their merit. Self-denial does, however, mean putting God and his kingdom priorities first. This should have a visible impact on the nature of one's financial commitments and service to church and world and should lead to the rejection of self-centered arrogance and pride." <sup>2</sup>
  2. I think Jesus is even going so far as to say that some of them might be crucified for their faith in Him
- C. Individuals
  1. Are we willing to die for our faith?
  2. For some of us that might be an easy answer (or at least we think so)
  3. Revelation 2:10 (ESV); Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
  4. I have never faced death for my faith — I have read about those who have (even in this century)
  5. We have all read or seen news stories about the shootings in churches — South Carolina, Kentucky, and even here in Texas
  6. If someone were to ask you to give up Jesus or die, what would your answer be?
  7. I know it is a hard question, but one Jesus asks us to answer — and to live out everyday
  8. Luke 9:23 (ESV); And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1039.

<sup>2</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 260.

9. Every day we must look at ourselves in the mirror — take an introspective look into who we are — and answer this question, “Are you (Evan) willing to die for your savior?”

D. The Church

1. But we also are a cohesive unit, a body that is connected together by the blood of Jesus
2. Cruise ship or battleship? — those on a cruise ship are consumers, those on a battleship are crew
3. We are the crew — every single one of us
4. The battleship cannot function without everyone doing their job
5. If one person doesn't work then someone who is working has to not only do his job but the other person's as well
6. Romans 12:4–8 (ESV); <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

E. In order to be a crown wearer we must be a cross bearer

III. Crown of Life

- A. There are several crowns mentioned in the New Testament
- B. This one literally refers to a military or athletic victory — however, the Jews used this term for a royal or priestly crown
  1. 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV); But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- C. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, mentions the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8) — right standing with God
  1. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV); For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- D. Paul uses the same word as James but refers to an athletic victory (1 Corinthians 9:25) — but this crown does not fade like the wreaths given to the victors, it is imperishable
  1. 1 Peter 1:3–4 (ESV); <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,
  2. Later, when speaking to the Elders, Peter uses the same word ‘unfading’ but describes the crown
  3. 1 Peter 5:4 (ESV); And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- E. John uses the phrase ‘crown of life’ when talking to Christians facing imminent death (Revelation 2:10)
  1. Matthew 16:24–25 (ESV); <sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
- F. All these crowns belong to us, to those who are cross bearers!

IV. Cross Bearers and Crown Wearers

- A. Take up your cross daily — die to yourself, deny yourself
- B. You are crew not consumers
- C. You will receive an unfading and imperishable crown of life, glory and righteousness