

know better what God wants you to know, what He wants you to do. Do you have the sticktuitiveness to go through and to finish the course? To finish up with as much zeal and determination as you started your service to Christ?

These are things we should be thinking about now. The habits that you establish now will make a tremendous difference in your accomplishment 30 years from now if the Lord tarries. It is so important in these formative years, these preparatory years to get that which will enable you to accomplish much in your first three years, but especially to get the habits and to learn the disciplines that will make a difference with your safe continuance through the years.

Paul could truly say this verse: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Paul looked forward even as one who runs a race and in the days of Paul the winner of the race was often crowned with a laurel wreath. So Paul looked forward, and I'm sure he had every reason to expect that God would give him a crown, a celebration for what he had accomplished. He says indeed, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day." How wonderful was the assurance that this was ahead, that the Lord was going to give him this crown of righteousness.

But Paul did not when he said this mean to single himself out as being way ahead of all others. Sometimes when we read one or two of the passages where Paul tells of how God blessed him, you have the feeling that he is exalting himself quite a bit. But when you read the books as a whole you see that he is not saying anything about himself but what was fully true and he deserved every bit of praise we might give him. He could say "there is in store for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day." But he said, And not only to me, but also so many others are to have this crown of righteousness.

Must you work like Paul did if you are to get it? Must you serve God as efficiently as actively, as successfully as Paul did to get this crown of righteousness? That's how many of us would feel if we could possibly compare what we could do with what Paul did. But Paul goes on and what he says can seem quite a shock, quite a surprise. He doesn't say, "To those who worked like I did, to those who accomplish a great deal for Christ as I have. He says something quite different. He says, "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."

I'm sure that readers who had never seen any of Paul's other epistles would feel that was quite a surprise. But the others who are to share, as Paul did, in this crown of righteousness are to be those who have longed for His appearing. Now this word "longed" is a little different in the KJV. The KJV says "all who have loved his appearing." I think that "love His appearing" is perhaps a little closer to the exact meaning