

3. For example, believers as parents have the duty to inculcate biblical standards into the souls of their children but apply these standards themselves while functioning in civil society.
4. The crown of righteousness is available to every believer who advances in his spiritual life to the attainment of spiritual maturity.
5. The passage of Scripture addressing this award is:

2 Timothy 4:7 I, Paul, have fought the honorable fight. I have completed my course. I have preserved and guarded the doctrines of the Word in my soul.

v. 8 In the eternal future a crown of righteousness is reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day [**the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ**], and not only to me, but also to all those who have loved His appearance. (EXT)

6. Paul begins verse 7 with the perfect middle indicative of the verb **ἀγωνίζομαι** (*agōnízomai*), used figuratively in persevering amid temptation and opposition (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7). It came to mean, “to wrestle as in an award contest, straining every nerve to the uttermost towards the goal” (1 Corinthians 9:25).
7. Paul has taken the obligation to “preserve and guard the doctrines of the Word” which also indicate the struggles associated with military combat.
8. His encouragement to Timothy, at the time he wrote 2 Timothy (c. A.D. 67), was probably influenced by the writings of Greek historians such as Polybius (c. 200–c. 118 B.C.).
9. Polybius’s original purpose was to document the military history of Rome conquering the world between the years 220–168 B.C.).

10. Polybius’s research led him to begin with Hannibal’s Spanish campaign against Rome which was victorious in numerous battles until he was defeated by Roman general, Scipio Africanus \af-ri-cā'-nus\ at the Battle of Zā'-ma in 202 B.C.
11. In his *History of Rome*, Polybius wrote:
All historians have insisted that the soundest education and training for political activity is the study of history, and that the surest and indeed the only way to learn how to bear bravely the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the disasters of others.¹
12. For the believer, his “soundest education and training” is the study of his own personal history of character traits, decision-making, and actions and how these have improved over time or not.
13. The battle is actually against self. Whether the situation confronted has its source from others or strictly from personal decision-making, its resolution remains in the soul of the believer.
14. Paul is taking claim to his own encounters in spiritual warfare and has learned through doctrine how to win these battles.
15. The intensive perfect tense of *agōnízomai* denotes a completed action with emphasis on existing results.
16. This is the last chapter of the last Epistle Paul wrote. He is looking back on his spiritual life and declaring his realization that he is on the verge of dying grace.
17. His personal analysis views his decision-making and actions have advanced him to the rarified level of occupation with Christ.
18. The middle voice is deponent thus active in meaning. He looks back on his life and can say without hesitation that he has no regrets.

¹ Frank W. Walbank, “Polybius,” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010), 9:576.

19. The indicative mood qualifies his conclusion as a statement of fact.
20. He asserts that he has fought “a good fight.” The word “good,” **καλός** (*kalós*) in Greek, does not convey the highest level of spiritual advance that Paul attained. It refers to the end result of taking the high ground of spiritual maturity.
21. The process of getting there involved taking on the battles imposed by the angelic conflict and learning to overcome them with doctrine.
22. The word “fight” is best modified by the words “honorable, distinguished, and virtuous” describing his thoughts, decisions, and actions associated with a clear conscience.
23. Paul confirms his contention that his earthly life is drawing to a close with the phrase, “I have finished, or completed, the course.”
24. This is where Paul’s illustration shifts to athletics and in this case a track race. The word “course” is the noun **δρόμος** (*drómos*): “a race.”²
25. The race is Paul’s spiritual life down to the present moment with emphasis on dying grace. With that, he concludes the thought with the proclamation that he has “guarded the doctrines of the Word in his soul.” (“Kept the faith” [NASB].)
26. The verb “guarded” is the perfect active indicative of **τηρέω** (*tēréō*): Figuratively meaning to “keep in safety, preserve, maintain; fulfill the duty.”
27. Paul has a biblically documented track record including confrontations with the Jewish hierarchy, Roman authorities, or confrontations with proponents of heretical religions.
28. It is in verse 8 that Paul looks to the future in heaven when he expects to be presented with the escrow blessing, crown of righteousness.

² “In the New Testament, used metaphorically meaning course, career, or one’s life, ministry (2 Timothy 4:7)” (Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., “δρόμος,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993], 484).

29. Paul indicates that such an honor is “reserved for me.” Because of his self-analysis in verse 7, he knows from divine revelation that he will receive this accolade for fulfilling his duty to the Lord.
30. We have already noted that the word “crown” is the Greek noun **στέφανος (stéphanos)**: the presentation of a decoration in the service of teaching, writing, and executing the principles of divine integrity.
31. The word righteousness is **δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosúnē)**. This word is translated “righteousness” when describing one of the attributes of divine essence.
32. When describing the attributes of a believer that has spent his Christian life growing in grace and consistently applying the imperative moods of Scripture, that person is considered an advocate of divine righteousness.
33. He reveals that the presentation of this crown will occur at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ by the term, “on that day.”
34. He goes on to indicate that others will receive this same honor “who have loved His appearance.”
35. The application of righteous standards in the life of a believer enables him to advance to spiritual maturity. When that advance achieves the copacetic spiritual life and occupation with Christ, then reception of this crown is assured.
36. This honor emphasizes the capacity to enjoy all the eternal rewards and decorations associated with escrow blessings and the Nike Awards.
37. Among the Nike Awards is the Uniform of Glory found in the fifth paragraph of the Nike Awards, “clothed in white garments” in Revelation 3:5.
38. Righteousness is the expression of the divine standards that define the integrity of God. As such, God’s righteousness rejects all relative standards of righteousness.