

## Minister's Message – February 2005

### Getting the Crown

The nation watched in wonder as Lleyton Hewitt battled his way through to the finals of the Australian Open. He fought back time and again, from seemingly impossible positions, to come up winner – except on the final day. Despite his tremendous effort the crown would not be his. We all applaud him for his skill and tenacity, but sadly he did not get the crown.

Thankfully for him, and for each one of us, winning the Australian Open, the US Open or Wimbledon, or becoming a billionaire or prime minister or the President is not all that life is about. Becoming a VIP through riches, sporting prowess or politics will not guarantee us victory in the greatest battle of all – our battle against death.

You can have victory in that battle. The apostle Paul knew that he had this victory. He knew that he would get the crown that really mattered, the crown given by Jesus Christ. *Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his (Jesus) appearing* (II Timothy 4:8).

How could Paul be so confident that he would get this crown? **Firstly** he recognized that the cause of death was sin. All of us have sinned and rebel against God: therefore we are all condemned to death. Paul was living out his life of sin when Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus. But Jesus had been crucified and now here he was speaking to him. How could this be?

**Secondly** he realized why Jesus died on the cross. If Jesus was alive he had risen from the dead. That meant that he was not a criminal after all, but approved by God. What Jesus had said must be true. His death was indeed as *the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world*.

Paul believed in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He became a follower of Jesus, serving him with all his strength, fighting the good fight of the faith. All his worldly achievements, his status before men, he regarded as dung he said (Philippians 3:8). He lived to please Jesus who had called him. He lived with his heart set on things above, set on the crown of righteousness.

Not only Paul, but you also who *love his appearing*, you who believe Jesus Christ is God the Son sent down from heaven; you who believe that Jesus died for your sins, you who believe that he rose again and ascended in to heaven. You also will receive the crown from Jesus on the Day he returns.

Believe in Jesus and you will be a winner like Paul and all who believe. You can be assured of the crown of righteousness – for it is by grace. *For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest alone should boast* (Ephesians 2:8).

*Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon*