

The Nobel Peace Prize: A Corruptible Crown

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”
—*I Corinthians 9:24*

OUR FEATURED SCRIPTURE

is a portion of the epistle written by Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth. In this letter he makes reference to the Olympic Games to illustrate his point. Even when this was written many centuries ago, the Olympic Games was a well known sporting event that took place at Olympia, Greece every four years. It already had a long history that dated back to 776 B.C. The apostle's reference to the 'prize' provided the brethren with a visual illustration in connection with the special prize that would be given to the winning athlete. He told them that his reference to the Olympic Games related to the consecrated followers of Christ Jesus who are also running for a more valuable prize—the heavenly prize of the High Calling in Christ Jesus.

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

A prize is the reward for winning something of value, or having achieved excellence in a particular competition. Various prizes have been offered to either individuals or groups for exceptional achievements or performance. Wealthy people have often left large sums of money, or other assistance, to those they believe indicate a high level of talent in a particular field of interest. One of the most highly sought prizes that may be won in our day is the Nobel Peace Prize. It is offered each year on December 10, the anniversary of Alfred Bernhard Nobel's death, and takes place in Norway, the country of his choice.

The foundation for the Nobel Peace Prize had its origin with Nobel, who was a Swedish inventor and industrialist. He designated funds for its establishment when he wrote his last will in 1895. The will stated that a prize would be awarded by a committee of five people elected by the Norwegian Parliament. The recipients were to be outstanding people, "who have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses." Since its inception the Nobel Prizes have been widely regarded as the most prestigious awards given for intellectual achievement in the world.

Nobel died a short time later in Italy in 1896. Although he was born in Sweden, his wishes designated that a Nobel Committee be set up to administer the award from Norway. His intentions are not entirely known, but it is believed by many that he chose Norway instead of Sweden because the

Norwegian Parliament was closely affiliated with the Inter-Parliamentary Union which was involved in resolving military conflicts at that time. Other reasons are thought to include Nobel's longtime friendship with Bertha von Sutter who was a peace activist. As further evidence for this, she later became the Honorary President of the Permanent International Peace Bureau, was the author of books dealing with the subject of peace, and was the winner of the Nobel Prize in 1905.

THE LAUREATES

The first Nobel Peace awards were given on the fifth anniversary of Nobel's death, December 10, 1901. Since that time the prize has honored men and women from many parts of the world for their outstanding work in achieving peace, as well as others who were selected for their work in chemistry, medicine, literature and, in recent years, economics.

Between the years 1901 and 2009, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 90 times to 120 Laureates. Of these they were given to individuals 97 times, and to organizations 23 times. However, the International Committee of the Red Cross received the award 3 times, in 1917, 1944, and in 1963. Also the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees received the award twice, in 1954 and 1981 which lowers the number of organizations to 20. Throughout the years many individuals have received the distinction of becoming Nobel Peace Prize Nominees. The nomination requires the support of one qualified person, but does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Nobel committee.

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

The first United States President to receive the Nobel Peace Prize was Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. He was given this honor because of his efforts to mediate the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. He presided over the Treaty of Portsmouth that was signed by Russia and Japan, but did not attend the award ceremony. Roosevelt sent Herbert Peirce who was a member of the United States State Department and was put in charge of the deliberations that were signed by Russia and Japan.

Woodrow Wilson was the second United States President to receive the Nobel Peace award in 1919, in recognition of his “Fourteen Points” peace program and his work toward achieving the Covenant of the League of Nations, in the Treaty of Versailles. Albert Schmedeman, who was the United States ambassador to Norway, accepted the award due to the President’s poor health.

In 2002, President Jimmy Carter won the prestigious award for his continued efforts to find peaceful solutions to the many worldwide conflicts of our time. He advanced democracy and human rights, and promoted economic and social development. He was also instrumental in Anwar al-Sadat and Menachem Begin sharing the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978.

United States President Barack Obama became the Nobel Peace Prize laureate on October 9, 2009. As the leader of the Democratic Party, he had only been a sitting President for a few months. In a statement that was issued shortly after the nomination, it was declared that he had been chosen because of his extraordinary efforts to strengthen

international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples.

The Nobel Committee's selection has sparked considerable controversy. Some demanded that President Obama decline the award because of his short time in office. They point out that he lacks experience, and has made no particular achievements in making peace proposals. The United States is currently conducting two wars in the Middle East, one in Iraq and the other in Afghanistan. As of this writing, the President is planning to send additional United States forces for the war in Afghanistan.

CHARLES DAWES

In addition to the four American Presidents who have received peace awards, United States Vice President Charles Dawes should also be included, as he, too, received the prize in 1925. Dawes was a member of President Warren Harding's administration, as well as that of President Calvin Coolidge. He was recognized for his work as chairman of the Dawes Committee which worked to solve the difficult issues concerning German reparation after World War I. He became Vice President elect when Coolidge was elected in 1924, and is the only Vice President to be honored with the Peace prize.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Through the process of selecting names for eligible candidates, some regrettable decisions have been made. Among the most notable of these was the omission of Mahatma Gandhi. This has been a widely discussed issue for many decades, and attempts

have been made to rectify the situation. However, the Committee confirms that Gandhi was nominated for the prize in the years 1937, 1938, 1939, 1947, and again a few days before he was murdered in January 1948.

Gandhi was the preeminent political and spiritual leader of India, and was an inspiration to his people during their Independence Movement. His tireless efforts have led the way towards other civil rights and freedom movements from around the world. He is officially honored as the Father of India, and his October 2nd birthday is commemorated as a national holiday, and as the International Day of Nonviolence internationally. Although he was not the originator of the principle of nonviolence, he was the first to apply it in the political field on a large scale.

After his murder in 1948, the Nobel Committee made a decision to not award a Peace Prize during the year of his death. The Committee declined to award a prize on the grounds that there was no suitable living candidate to receive the honor that year. It is worthy of note that when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Peace Prize in 1989 the Committee's Chairman announced that this was "in part a tribute to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi."

YASSER ARAFAT

Controversy arose over the nomination of Yasser Arafat, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994. Two others shared the award with him—Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin—for their successful negotiations resulting from the 1993 Oslo Accords.

The Oslo Accords were a culmination of agreements that had dated from the Madrid Conference of 1991. It negotiated between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization as part of a peace process which attempted to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite their efforts, the Accords were not fully implemented and the conflict has never been resolved. They had been officially signed at Washington, D.C. with Arafat signing for the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Peres also signed for the State of Israel, with Israel's Prime Minister Rabin as a witness.

The decision to award Arafat was based on the understanding that he had renounced his terrorist tactics, and had become a true participant in achieving peace. However, the Oslo Accords demanded Arafat to recognize Israel's right to exist, and to guarantee its people safety and security. He was also required to work toward resolving any remaining problems that may exist between the two parties. However, even during 1993 and 1994, there was a high rate of P.L.O. terrorism conducted against Israel resulting in many Israeli citizens being killed or injured.

Controversy arose within the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, and Kaare Kristiansen who was a member of the Committee resigned. He said he would not support the kind of peace prize that included Yasser Arafat. Due to Arafat's terrorist behavior, it soon became clear that he was not committed to the peace process, and it ultimately failed. Since that time various groups have come forward demanding that his peace prize be revoked. He died in 2004.

INFAMOUS NOMINEES

When the Nobel Peace Prize nominations for the fifty-year period 1901-1951 were released to the public, it was realized that it contained the names of some highly controversial figures. Included among the names of possible candidates were Benito Mussolini and Joseph Stalin, but neither of them received the nomination. Furthermore it was learned that Adolph Hitler had been officially nominated in 1939, just before the onset of World War 2. The nomination was retracted after a short period of time.

SEEKING A HIGHER PRIZE

For over a century, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee has continued to recognize many outstanding men and women from various parts of the world who have achieved very high levels of success in their various fields of intellectual endeavor. These awards pale in significance however, when they are compared to the much higher and grander prize that is offered to the faithful followers of our Lord Jesus during this present Gospel Age. There are yet those who are giving their lives in complete consecration to our loving Heavenly Father, and striving to make their calling and election sure. This 'little flock' will receive the prize of spiritual life on the highest of all planes of life, the divine nature. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32

A CROWN INCORRUPTIBLE

Within the context of our featured scripture—I Corinthians 9:24—the Apostle Paul speaks of an

incorruptible crown that the Lord's faithful people will receive as an inheritance of their High Calling in Christ Jesus. From the apostle's letter, we consider his further words of counsel. "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."—vss. 25-27

Paul's words 'so fight I' clearly reveal the covenant of sacrifice and self-denial that he had made with our loving Heavenly Father, and he thus encourages every one of the Lord's people to give diligence in seeking the prize of their High Calling. The apostle suggests the thought of Christian warfare, and our continuing battle to overcome the desires of our fallen flesh, the temptations of the world, and the wiles of the Adversary. He reminds us that we must carry out our lives of consecration with much determination and fortitude. This walk in the narrow way of sacrifice starts at the time we made our covenant with God, and it will end at the time of our death. From the words of the revelator, we read, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

The Apostle Peter emphasizes the merit of our Lord Jesus' precious blood, wherein we have the promise of receiving the spiritual inheritance in his future kingdom. He explains, "Forasmuch as ye

know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”—I Pet. 1:18,19

He then uses the word “incorruptible” to address the true value of the seed of promise. We therefore, “having been regenerated, not from corruptible, but from incorruptible Seed, through the living and enduring Word of God.”—vs. 23, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Heb. 12:1-3

ENDURING HARDNESS

In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he introduced the thought of Christian warfare and combativeness by using the illustration of a soldier. He said, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.”—II Tim. 2:3-5

Soldiers of the cross of Jesus are thus encouraged to hold high the banner of truth and righteousness. They are instructed to do this with meekness and much patience, and with long-suffering and brotherly kindness. The true people of God are willing to forego the rights and privileges of the present life. They have learned to control the mind of the New Creature in Christ Jesus, and have willingly submitted themselves to doing the will of a loving and merciful Heavenly Father. All who have accepted the heavenly calling during this present Gospel Age will be blessed in proportion to the degree and level of their spiritual life, which is hidden in Christ Jesus. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."—Gal. 6:8,9

DENYING SELF

When making a full consecration to our loving Heavenly Father, we learn to accept his will in our lives, which points to a life of self-denial and sacrifice even unto death. This lesson was expressed by our Lord, and recorded by Matthew, which reads, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of

his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”—Matt. 16:24-27

PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING

In his letter to the church at Philippi, the Apostle Paul testifies to the goodness of God, his appreciation for the heavenly calling, and his determination to make his calling and election sure. His admonition is applicable to all of the Lord’s people who continue to strive for a place in the spiritual kingdom of Christ Jesus.

“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:7-14

May we thus heed Paul's further counsel, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."—Heb. 10:35-39

ENTERING A NEW YEAR

As we leave the old year behind and enter the new year before us, we do so with the understanding that we are now living during the closing years of this present Gospel Age, and its accompanying time of trouble and distress of nations. This was foretold in the prophetic words of Isaiah, who wrote, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." (Isa. 63:4) However, we trust that the heavenly calling which has been extended to a little flock of the Lord's followers will soon be completed. When this work is finished, Christ's kingdom will be set up for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

With this wonderful hope in mind, let us each strive with greater diligence for the prize of our High Calling in Christ Jesus. It cannot be compared with any other, and is truly the grandest and most wonderful gift that has ever been offered to a select few of the human creation. Paul said, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are

not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—Rom. 8:18

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”—Rev. 19:7-9 ■