

Thankful in Defeat

Ready:

“Be thankful in all circumstances...”— 1 Thessalonians 5:18a NLT

Set

“Let me just first say I’m incredibly thankful for our team. Just an unreal year. Incredible...I’m thankful and just blessed to have been a part of it with these guys.” These are some of the sentiments shared by Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney after his team lost the 2020 championship game to LSU. He went on to talk about LSU and answer questions about the game. But he made sure to relay how thankful he was, even in defeat.

Losing is hard! We play sports because they are fun, to be sure, but if possible, we’d like to win too. It does not matter if it is a huge loss or just a near miss, losing is tough. Coach Dabo was on the national stage, with his team playing before millions across the country. After losing by 17 points, he was gracious even though the outcome did not go his way. He was right in his remarks! As hard as it is, we can be thankful when we lose.

Let’s first remember to be thankful that we could participate at all. Some people have something physical that can hinder them from playing sports. Sometimes something big (world events, pandemics, etc.) cancels sports for many. If it is a pre-season game, playoff game, or pick-up game, the chance to participate at all should be a joyous thing to the athlete or coach.

There is something about competition that can turn a team into a family. Going through tryouts, practices, and film sessions can help you form bonds with one another. But when you are out there together facing opposition with everyone putting in the best effort in their role, it can solidify you as a family, win or lose. Be grateful for those around you in those contests.

It’s wise to look at losses as chances to learn. No game, match, or contest is ever played perfectly so every game, match, or contest is a chance to build up and get better. In a way, a loss can help you better see the areas of improvement.

For the Christian competitor, there is a reason to give thanks no matter what. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul closes his letter with a list of instructions to help them live for Christ. Verse 18 says, *“...be thankful in all circumstances...”* No matter the situation, we should be thankful. Think about Job! In chapter 1, Job loses his livestock, workers, and even his children. But in verse 20, he still worships God saying, *“I came naked from my mother’s womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!”*

When Job lost just about everything except his life, he still chose to worship and praise God.

No one likes to lose. It is possibly the toughest part of any game or sport to deal with. It may not be easy to find the reasons to be thankful when we lose, but it is worth the effort. More importantly, our God is worth the honor when we give Him praise.

Go

- What was the worst loss you ever faced in your athletic or coaching career?
- Thinking back, what did you learn in that loss?
- How can you glorify God even when you lose?

Workout

Job 1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Overtime

“Father, losing isn’t easy. But we glory in the chance You provide for us to participate. Help us to focus on You in each situation and You alone. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Bible Reference:

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Job 1

Job 2

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



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