

# The Thrill of Victory, the Agony of Defeat

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

A. Wide, Wide World of Sports with Jim McKay and the slogan “The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.” Everyone remembers the image of defeat: the skier flying through the air in a painful tangle of limbs. Does anyone remember who represented the “thrill of victory”? In 1969, it was an unknown formula car racer; in 1974, it was Cassius Clay (Muhammed Ali); and in 1981, it was the US Olympic hockey team that defeated the Soviet Union (called the Miracle on Ice). The victory representative changed over the years, but the defeat representative remained the same.

For years, the opening of "The Wide World of Sports" television program illustrated "the agony of defeat" with a painful ending to an attempted ski jump. On March 7, 1970, the skier, Vinko Bogataj of Yugoslavia, appeared in good form as he headed down the jump, but then, for no apparent reason, he tumbled head over heels off the side of the jump, bouncing off the supporting structure.

What viewers didn't know was that Vinko chose to fall rather than finish the jump. Why? As he explained later, the jump surface had become too fast, and midway down the ramp, he realized if he completed the jump, he would land on the level ground beyond the safe slope landing area, which could have been fatal. As it was, the skier suffered no more than a headache from the tumble. The melodrama of the narration—which became a catchphrase in the US—transformed the uncredited ski jumper into an icon of bad luck and misfortune, recited in the opening credits every week by Jim McKay. Meanwhile, having retired to his quiet, private life in Slovenia, Bogataj was unaware of his celebrity, and so he was very surprised to be asked to attend the 20th anniversary celebration for Wide World of Sports in 1981, where he received the loudest standing ovation of any athlete introduced at the gala.

B. The Bible has some images of victory and defeat that are memorable, that remain in our memories with vivid clarity.

1. Images of defeat and sorrow
2. Images of victory and joy
3. Lessons that can be learned from both

## I. IMAGES OF DEFEAT AND SORROW

A. “Some mocked” - Acts 17:32

1. Consider Acts 17:16-34; read 30-32
2. The resurrection of Christ is the most important event in history; it is the foundation of faith.
3. Rom. 1:4; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; 1Cor. 15:13-19
4. By the resurrection, we are justified - Rom. 4:24-25, 6:5-6
5. Baptism saves by the resurrection - 1Peter 3:21; Col. 2:12; 1Peter 1:3

B. “We will not walk therein” - Jer. 6:10-16

1. If we want to have any hope, we cannot allow our selves to be tempted to slip up close to the world and try to live like it does. We must seek the old paths.
2. Psalm 119:105; Rom. 6:4; 1John 1:7; 2Cor. 5:7; Col. 3:17; Rom. 10:17;

3. 1Peter 4:11; Gal. 1:6-10
- C. "Who concerning the truth have erred" - 2Tim. 2:17-18
  1. At one time, they followed the truth, then erred from the truth, lost hope in resurrection, leading others into a loss of faith.
  2. How do brethren err from the truth? They:
    - a. Succumb to materialism - 1Tim. 6:10; Luke 8:14, 12:16-21
    - b. Succumb to the desires of the flesh - 1Cor. 10:6-8
    - c. Succumb to false doctrine - 1John 4:1, 6
    - d. Succumb to spiritual laziness - Rev. 2:10; Heb. 5:12
  3. Regardless of the cause, those erring from the truth are lost.
- D. "Concerning the faith have made shipwreck" - 1Tim. 1:19-20
  1. A shipwreck (on 4/15/1912; 1,517 souls lost when the Titanic sank) is a disaster, but making shipwreck of one's faith is even a greater disaster.
    - a. Matt. 16:26
- E. "And the door was shut" - Matt. 25:10
  1. How sad it must have been when the door on the ark was shut.
    - a. Gen. 7:15-16
  2. Matt. 25:1-13 - There will be some Christians waiting for the Lord who will be caught unprepared at His coming.
    - a. Those who were ready went in.
    - b. The others made a start, but failed to enter because they did not remain ready.
  3. Unfortunately the majority will find the door shut - Luke 13:23-27
- F. "Depart from me" - Matt. 7:21-23
  1. So many will stand in shock as they hear these words in Judgment.
    - a. Those failing to use their talents - Matt. 25:30
    - b. Those who are not benevolent - Matt. 25:41
    - c. Those who do not obey the Gospel - 2Thes. 1:7-9
- G. "Go thy way for this time" - Acts 24:22, 24-25
  1. As far as we know Felix never had another opportunity to obey - 24:27
  2. We never know when our last opportunity for obedience will come.
  3. James 4:14; 2Cor. 6:2
- H. "Almost" - Acts 26:28 - Believing is "almost"; obeying is "altogether."
  1. Many believers will be lost - John 12:42; Acts 26:29; Matt. 7:24-27

## II. IMAGES OF VICTORY AND JOY

- A. "He will save his people from their sins" - Matt. 1:21
  1. We so desperately needed Him - Rom. 3:23, 6:23
  2. He came to save us - Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15
  3. He did it! - Heb. 7:25; Col. 1:21, Heb. 2:11
- B. "For God so loved the world" - John 3:16
  1. Rom. 5:8; 1Tim. 2:4
- C. "God is no respecter of persons" - Acts 10:34-35
  1. God's requirements are understandable, equitable, and attainable.
  2. Rom. 2:5-11

- D. "There is made of necessity a change also of the law" - Heb. 7:12
  - 1. That law made nothing perfect - Heb. 7:19
  - 2. It could not take away our sins - Heb. 10:1-4
  - 3. It was a yoke of bondage - Gal. 5:1; Heb. 10:17
- E. "By which, when you read, you may understand" - Eph. 3:4
  - 1. One of our greatest blessings is also the blessing we take for granted the most often, that of having easy access to and easy understanding of the will and word of God.
    - a. It has not always been so... Patriarchal age, God only spoke to heads of righteous households.
    - b. From Adam to Noah there was only one written prophecy of future salvation.
    - c. During time of Law of Moses, only priests and prophets had access to revelation of God; it was a limited revelation, and the people were completely dependent on priests and prophets to hear it.
    - d. Now everyone has multiple copies of God's word, and many opportunities to hear it taught, and we have to beg them into reading it and cajole them into coming to Bible study.
  - 2. John 6:66-68, 12:46-50
  - 3. All blessings come with responsibilities. It is true that when we read, we will understand the will of God; but, it is necessary to work diligently to do it - 2Tim. 2:15; 2Peter 3:15-16; Mark 12:37
  - 4. Consider the blessings of being able to understand God's word:
    - a. Our faith does not depend on the wisdom of men - 1Cor. 2:4-5
    - b. We can and must test everyone's teaching - Acts 17:11-12
    - c. We can work out our own salvation - Phil. 2:12
    - d. We can study and understand the book that will judge us
      - 1) John 12:48; 1Thes. 2:13; 2Thes. 2:10-14
- F. "By grace you have been saved through faith" - Eph. 2:8
  - 1. When grace meets obedient faith, the result is salvation.
    - a. Rom. 3:23-26; 10:17; Acts 18:8
  - 2. Even though salvation is provided through God's grace and is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8), faith is critical - Heb. 11:6
  - 3. Works of faith, "which God prepared beforehand," are required.
    - a. Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-26
- G. "If God is for us, who can be against us" - Rom. 8:31
  - 1. What evidence do we have that this is true? - Rom. 8:32
  - 2. We can face any difficulty with confidence, we can overcome any obstacle, we can overcome any enemy.
    - a. Rom. 8:33-39; Phil. 4:6-7
- H. "We are God's fellow workers" - 1Cor. 3:5-9
  - 1. Paul said this in connection with his work at spreading the Gospel
    - a. What a grand thought that God considers us His co-workers!
  - 2. Every generation is a new generation; therefore, the Great Commission becomes an imperative every generation is responsible to fulfill.

- a. Mark 16:15-16; 1Thes. 1:7-9
- I. "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" - Rom. 8:16-17
  - 1. Can you imagine being a joint heir with Christ?
    - a. What He is now in heaven, we will be when we get there.
    - b. 1John 3:2; Rev. 1:10-18
  - 2. We must remain faithful until then - 1Peter 1:3-5; Rev. 2:10
- J. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" - Phil. 1:21
  - 1. Paul was torn between his desire to be with Christ and to continue his labors - Phil. 1:21-24
    - a. A man like this cannot lose under any circumstances, except the loss of his faith.
  - 2. Whether we realize it or not, all of us are living this passage every day.
  - 3. How? Slightly modify Paul's statement and let each of us make the application to ourselves: For to me to live is \_\_\_\_\_, and to die is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 4. If the "to live" is anything but Christ, then death will not be gain.
  - 5. If the "to live" is Christ, then the dying will be the greatest triumph of our lives.

Conclusion:

- A. In the Judgment, will our destiny be determined by:
  - 1. Words that describe a life of eternal joy and triumph, the thrill of unending victory,
  - 2. Or words that describe the unending agony of defeat, sorrow, regret, and pain.
- B. Our choices in the present determine what words we will hear on that day.