

It was cold and not just any kind of cold but the cold that you feel in your bones. The ground was frozen mud and grass and it was hard to get any sort of traction at all. You could see the breath vapors appear from underneath the masks of our opponents and teammates alike. It was late and we were tired, bruised, but not defeated. I could feel the rush of adrenaline fill my muscles as the opposing team broke their huddle and made their way to the line of scrimmage. I looked down the line at my fellow teammates and felt their determination. There we were, hands grasping frozen grass and mud; digging in with our cleats. The intensity level; the adrenaline; the desire all about to hit the boiling point—All I, scratch that—All we needed to see was one finger twitch, one slight movement of the ball and we would surge headlong into battle crashing, hitting, tackling just as we had been trained to do. The game was on the line. A touchdown here meant our season was over and for many of us high school football would end. I didn't want it to end. My fellow seniors didn't want it to end so we dug in deep and waited.

The ball was snapped; the twitch, the sound of ready we'd been waiting for and all that was heard was the clashing of helmets and the roar of the action taking place. Time seemed to stand still. I saw the hand off to the full back. I had him in my sights and made myself ready as we hit and then thundering sound and feeling of other hitting here and there to stop the ball carrier. And then I heard that which I didn't want to hear—the roar of their crowd and the excitement of the opposing team as the ball narrowly crossed the goal line. We were defeated. We had lost and now at the young age of eighteen I felt the crushing blow of defeat and I felt lost.

As you can tell reader, that memory some twenty years later is still fresh in my mind, but the reality is that it was just a football game played between two small single A schools for playoff game. In the grand scheme of things it didn't mean the end of all there would ever be; only the end of one thing and the beginning of another chapter in life.

I want to call your attention to Matthew 26:53, "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" Jesus spoke those words after He had prayed in the fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane three times, after He his sweat had turned to blood and after Peter had pulled his sword at cut off the right ear of high priest's servant. Think about that for just a minute. Jesus could've called twelve legions of angels to His aid. That's an astonishing number when you really think about it. One legion is approximately 6,000 and so twelve legions would be approximately 72,000 strong. Picture this if you will. It was going on the final hours of Jesus' life on this earth. The Son of Man was about to be beaten, scourged, mocked, and finally cruelly crucified and these 72,000 strong angels stood ready. All they need was the word, a nod, and they would descend from heaven and protect the Son of God. They dug in deep and waited, but the word, the nod, the smallest twitch never came from the Son or the Father.

Seventy thousand stood ready to defend only to watch the Son go to the cross for a world that would largely turn their back on Him. Many there that day our Savior was crucified and buried thought they'd been defeated. All they heard was roar of victory from the Romans and the Jewish Sanhedrin that thought they'd won. The thing is He arose on the third day to prove His true victory. Yes, He could have called 12 legions of angels but He chose to suffer death for you and me. So it was not defeat but victory as the Savior died and the 72,000 stood ready, it was really only the beginning.

This idea for this article was given to me prior to a Sunday morning worship service and as I was listening I literally. I wrote it but the true credit goes to a true friend I shall just call "Coach". You see when we think we've been defeated; we only need to look to Jesus to find the true victory in life. Thanks "Coach" for your inspiring words of encouragement and may the Father bless you all you walk daily with Him.