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State Champions

Moment of Manna

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I don't watch many movies. I certainly don't pay to watch many movies, but this past week, I watched three movies. The first one was last Sunday night and I actually paid to watch it. It was *Blind Side*, and it was excellent. It was about a homeless black teenager...a high school dropout...who wandered the streets aimlessly with no purpose in life and no hope for the future. It was about how a Christian white woman and her family took him in, gave him a home, got him back into school, and helped him develop into an outstanding football player. The movie shows all he faced to achieve this goal, and how he faced down his fear. It was the true story of Michael Oher, who now plays offensive lineman for the Baltimore Ravens professional football team. This is his first year, and he stands ready to be named Rookie of the Year. It was very inspiring.

The second movie was on TV. I didn't choose it. It caught my eye as I was flipping through the channels. It was called *Gracie*. It was about a young high school girl who had three brothers; one older and two younger. The older brother was an outstanding soccer player at school. The two younger brothers also played at their respective schools. Since there was no girls' team, Gracie played just for the love of the game with her brothers. One day during an important game at the high school, Gracie's older brother missed the shot that would have given his team the win and put them in the State Championship game; a game he always dreamed of being in. That night, as he was coming home from the game, there was a car accident and he was killed. Gracie was heartbroken and tried to think of some way to keep her brother's dream alive. She decided she was going to go out for the boy's team and help bring the State trophy back to the school in memory of her brother. The movie goes on to show all she faced to achieve this goal, and how she faced down her fear.

The third movie was also on TV and I didn't choose this one either. It too caught my eye as I was flipping through the channels. It was called *Facing the Giants*. It was about a Christian high school football team that also had the dream to play in the State Championship game. They were a small school with only 32 players going against teams that had as many as 85 players. They usually finished last. Then one year they got a new coach. This coach spent much of his time quoting the Bible to inspire his

team. He told them the story of facing the giants...how giants always seem bigger than they really are, and when God is on your side, you can do amazing things...unbelievable things. The movie goes on to show all they faced to achieve this goal, and how they faced down their fear.

I thought it was interesting that all three of these movies that I happened to watch, all dealt with high school sports. I happen to prefer high school sports over any other level. High school sports are still played for love of the game, and the players are still taught the principles of good sportsmanship and team play. You hardly ever find that at the college level any more. They're all trying to make it to the pros. And you almost never find it at the professional level. There it's all about the money. Players move from team to team based on the highest bidder. There's no more team loyalty.

I also thought it was interesting that all three of these movies that I happened to watch all dealt with the importance of overcoming fear in order to achieve goals. No matter what comes against us; no matter how big it seems; we will never be successful unless we face it down. If you lose because you just couldn't do it, there's no shame in that. At least you tried. But if you quit because you're afraid you might not be able to do it, shame on you. Fear stops us from being all that we can be. Fear stops us from doing all that we can do. Fear stops us from reaching the potential that God ordained in us. Fear is Satan's favorite weapon. How many times has he used it to stop us from going out and witnessing for God; stopped us from praying out loud for a brother or sister who had a hunger to hear the Word; stopped us from taking a stand in defense of our God.

God felt overcoming fear was so important that He tells us to "fear not" 365 times in the Bible. Interesting that there are 365 days in the year. That's one different "fear not" thought for every day of the year. Remember:

"but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."(Prov 1:33)

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear"(Rom 8:15)

"So we say with confidence, the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Heb 13:16)

"Fear not, for I am with you always." (Isa 41:10)

Let's purpose in our hearts to be the best we can be. Let's not let fear slow us down. Let's remember that when we need that offensive linebacker to block for us, God is suited up and ready to go. When we need to kick that winning goal, God is there to

give us the perfect pass. And when we need each other to pull together, God is there to coach us to victory. Remember, He tells us:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."(Phil 4:13)

Let's set aside that irrational fear and go out there and become the State Champions we know we are.