

SOMEBODY IS WATCHING!

(A meditation for the New Year)

Tonight Show host, Jay Leno, says that he draws strength from his audience. As a child he read the book *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*. One line in that book, he says, sums up his life. Mike Mulligan, and his old steam shovel named Mary Anne, were digging a hole where a sky scraper was to be built. The book said: "When people used to stop and watch them, Mike Mulligan and Marry Anne used to dig a little faster and a little better. The more people stopped, the faster and better they dug".

We know this is true. We behave differently when we know that people are watching. The television show "Candid Camera" has been built around this very principle. We behave one way when we do not know that anyone is watching, and another way when it dawns on us that we are on national television.

God knows our frame and remembers that we are dust (Ps. 103:14). He made us and understands perfectly what it takes for us to operate at maximum efficiency. Therefore He reminds us that we surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1). Athletes refer to the "home field advantage". Somehow we can run a little faster, jump a little higher, and throw a little further when the home fans are cheering us on.

The witnesses who are cheering us on, however, are invisible to the human eye. They are angelic hosts and the spirits of just men made perfect. This fact is at the heart and core of Christianity.

The inspired writer of Hebrews draws a stunning contrast between Jewish worship and Christian worship. (See Hebrews 12:18-24)

Jewish worship was built around:

- A mountain that could be touched, and that burned with fire.
- An audible voice so frightening that the people begged for silence.
- Physical threats that involved both men and animals.
- An experience so frightening that even Moses trembled with fear.

Christian worship, however, was not like this at all. Because of persecution Christians often met in secret. There was no visible or audible presence of God. The essence of Christianity involved:

- Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the city of the living God.
- Thousands of angels in joyful assembly.
- The church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.
- God, the Judge of all men.
- The spirits of just men made perfect.
- Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant.
- And to sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

For us to draw energy from our audience, however, we have to know that we are being watched. For believers, this does not involve "flesh and blood", but the "principalities and powers in heavenly places". When Stephen died for his faith, God opened heaven so that he could see Jesus standing at the right hand of God to cheer him on (Acts 7:54-60). His death was victorious. He died, as Jesus did, praying for those who killed him.

As we face the challenges of a New Year we also need to draw energy from our audience. Every day we need to "smile" and realize that we are on God's Candid Camera. Those aggravating circumstances at work, or in the home, will be much easier to endure when we realize that someone is watching. When Satan whispers in our ear that no one will know, or that no one will find out, we will weigh him in the balance and find him wanting. He is a liar and the father of all lies. Someone is watching, and someone will find out. **"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb. 12:1).**