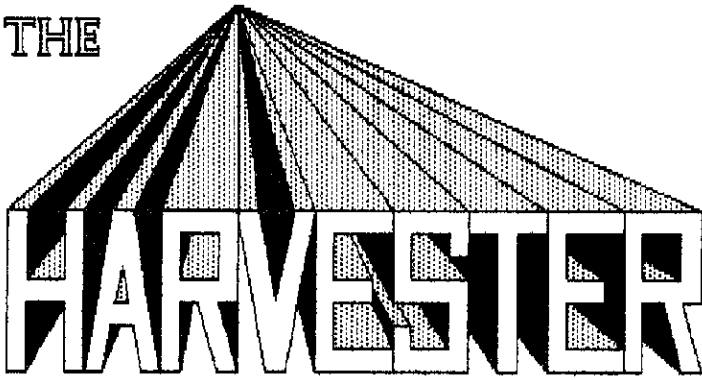


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

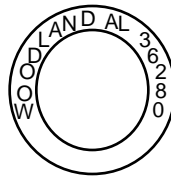
SEPTEMBER 2000

No. 177

BALCONY PEOPLE

The Israelites thought they were "home-free" when they left Egypt. God had just displayed his awesome and wondrous miracles before Pharaoh when they were finally released from their lifelong bondage. But as they approached the outskirts of Egypt, they saw the Red Sea blocking their path. To make matters worse they could hear and feel the rumble of Pharaoh's army behind them. He had changed his mind again! Now the Israelites were facing certain slaughter among the horses and chariots of Egypt.

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It was a time of total discouragement for the children of Israel. Moses knew it and therefore, under the God's guidance, "Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." (Exo. 14:13) Moses stood up and became a "balcony" person.

What is a "balcony" person? A few days ago I became introduced to this term and I liked the idea. Balcony people are those who encourage others. Sometimes they are our own private cheering section, rooting for others to succeed. Balcony people applaud our efforts. They sit up in the balcony of the theater and clap during critical moments of the performance. Balcony people are great encouragers.

It seems that we need balcony people in the church today. We live in a time when everyone wants to focus on the negative. Balcony people will accentuate the positive. We live in an age when folks are using telescopes and microscopes to find faults in others. It is a time when much discouragement and much destructive criticism exists and we are busy making excuses for our shortcomings. Like the children of Israel, we have fear in our faces because we see the Red Sea in front of us and the Egyptians coming fast behind us and have forgotten the one True God around us! Balcony people will do their best to encourage the members and will not let anybody defeat himself before he has even tried. They will applaud every worthwhile effort.

What are some qualities we would find in balcony people? First, they speak positive words. When a person is feeling low, balcony people seem to know just the right words to pick that person up. They use words that edify or strengthen a member. They say things that build confidence and offer understanding. How encouraging it was to me when I felt that I had "messed up" in giving a lesson, yet some sister or brother in the church pointed out a "bright" spot in my sermon and gave me something to build on. Those positive words let me know someone was still in balcony, cheering me onward.

The Apostle Paul must have experienced a little discouragement as he vainly tried to plead his cause before the Jews in Acts 23. Eventually the Roman soldiers had to arrest him and put him in prison for his safety. Nevertheless the Lord spoke words of encouragement for Paul's sake. *"Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."* (Acts 23:11) These few words were enough to help Paul complete his mission.

Balcony people also think positive. We all know that what dwells in our mind affects our words and actions. *"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he"* (Prov. 23:7). *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."* (Lk. 6:45) Balcony people tend to have nurturing, encouraging, and supporting thoughts.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address and all correspondence to:

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Thus, we might say that balcony people have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) "*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind*" (1 Pet. 4:1). Recall how Jesus encouraged the disciples when they saw Him walking on the sea. "*But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*" (Matt. 14:27)

Finally, balcony people produce more balcony people. It's like the spreading of the Good News. When one person hears the gospel and obeys it, he wants to share that hope with others. So he goes and tells another. In the Great Commission, Jesus told His followers that once they became disciples, they needed to make disciples of other nations (Matt. 28:19). Balcony people probably were encouraged when they were younger. Now they are only echoing what they received at an earlier time.

As Christians we have much to be encouraged about. Moses probably summed it up best for God's people when he told the Israelites: "*Be strong and of a good*

courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Deut. 31:6) That principle still applies today. But sometimes we need to be reminded of it. Sometimes we need balcony people.

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Which church (congregation) had turned aside to "*another gospel*"?
2. Who fell asleep during one of Paul's sermons?
3. On which day of creation did God make trees and plants?
4. Which prophet was told not to marry?
5. Which people searched the Scriptures daily?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Whose sin was responsible for the Israelite's defeat at Ai? ACHAN'S (Josh. 7:1)
2. Which of Jesus' 12 disciples kept the money bag? JUDAS (John 12:6)
3. What was Barnabas' other name? JOSES (Acts 4:36)

4. In which city did some silversmiths start a riot? EPHEBUS (Acts 19:23+)

5. Which prophet complained, "I am only a child"? JEREMIAH (Jer. 1:6)

"HAVE TO"

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2:11-14)

Verse 14 of this passage says that Christ gave Himself for us, to free us from our sins. This verse also says that He did this to purify a "peculiar" people to serve Him, and that these people would be eager to serve Him. This part is interesting to me.

Growing up, I often heard speakers tell of the importance of Bible study, visiting the sick, etc. -- all of which are good things to be "zealous" about. But sometimes I felt these good activities were forced on us as being mandatory. "You HAVE to study. You HAVE to visit." They become a burden instead of the joy that a zealous work should be.

In my experience, most people don't like to be told that they absolutely, positively HAVE to do something, no matter what it is. As kids, we didn't like it when our parents told us we HAD to clean our room, brush our teeth, and go to bed at a certain time. As adults, we don't like to be told by our bosses that we HAVE to do a certain assignment. When people are given "commands" they sometimes develop the "HAVE to" attitude -- they complete the task because they "have to", but their heart really isn't in it.

This is not the attitude we should have as Christians! Paul spoke words in Titus 2:14 that are definitely against it. *"...and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."* "Zealous of good works" definitely does not equal "HAVE to"!

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"...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18b)

When Jesus made this statement He introduced a new concept of religion. Before the foundation of the world God had predetermined that because man would choose to transgress against His will, there would be provided a way back for man. This way back is the religion of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:9).

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Sept. McDonald 6 - 10	Antioch Church Livingston, TN	James (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 8 - 10 (F-Su)	Fayetteville Road Fairburn, GA 7:00pm E.S.T.	Kevin Mills (Newnan, GA)
Sept. McDonald 11 - 15	Oak Grove Church Liberty, KY	James (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 15 - 17	Pleasant Ridge Church Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Sept. McDonald 18 - 22	Verona, KY	James (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 18 - 22	Estesburg Church near Eubank, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Sept. McDonald 25 - 29	Mt. Zion Church Crab Orchard, KY	James (Woodbury, TN)

* * * * *

MY WORK

Lord, let me not die until I've done for Thee
My earthly work, whatever it may be.
Call me not hence with mission unfulfilled;
Let me not leave my space of ground untilled;
Impress this truth upon me, that not one
Can do my portion that I leave undone.

-- Author Unknown --