



"Teach us, O Lord, the discipline of patience, for to wait is often harder than to work."

—Peter Marshall

17-May-13

The Harvest Is Almost In!

I used to work with a man named Bill. He was a good salesman and, as I recall, a good pilot as well. He liked to sell, and he seemed pretty well-adjusted to his life and the times we live in. Yet, when his memories would drift back to the days when he was a boy, a genuine fondness for his early past would come over him, and anyone looking at him could see that he wished he could step back in time.

Bill had been raised on a farm, and with a smile, he would tell us how, in the harvest season, he would rise from his bed a little after three o'clock in the morning, go out to the fields with his dad, grandfather, and a small hired crew, and work until about eight o'clock. At that point, all hands would return to the house, where the women would have a huge breakfast laid out for them. He told me that he would eat quite a few eggs—six to eight of them—and steak and homemade bread. When they were finished, all of them would head out to the field, work until noon, and repeat the process, finally coming in for good after dark for dinner.

After the harvest was in, they would all feel a large measure of satisfaction and accomplishment. Once all the work was done, the pressure was off; the

fight to endure the discipline required to finish the massive job of bringing in the farm's crop was over.

Bill did this every year until he left the farm, and those feelings of accomplishment always lived in his memories. He knew from years of difficult experience that one had to endure the hard work to reap the rewards of the harvest.

It is easy to imagine that this year has not been particularly easy for anyone. We still suffer great financial problems nationwide. As a country, we have a debt that tops \$16 trillion, and several states' balance sheets are billions in the red. Cities in California and elsewhere are going bankrupt, so they cannot pay police, firemen, city workers, etc. Jobs are so scarce in some places that millions have dropped off the rolls of those looking for work. Too many of us have difficulties keeping our financial noses above water, unable to make house payments, credit card payments, and utility bills.

And those are just our money problems! We also have health problems that always seem to be increasing, problems with our food, problems with crime, problems with terrorism, problems with political scandals, problems with marriage and family relations, problems with sexual matters, and the list goes on. There is no end to all the problems in this world. We cry out to [God](#) to send us a righteous leader, someone to turn back the clock on some of our "progress," but we know in our heart of hearts that human leadership is not the true answer to our dilemma.

God sent a truly great, righteous king to Judah not long before that nation fell to the Babylonians. He did his level best to restore true worship and return the people to God (see II Kings 23). Yet, even with a righteous leader, the country still fails once he is taken away:

Now before [[Josiah](#)] there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of [Moses](#); nor after him did any arise like him. Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. ([II Kings 23:25-26](#))

In other words, all the evils done by the previous evil king, which the people had enthusiastically followed, could not be undone by a righteous leader. As soon as he was dead, the people reverted to their wicked ways, and their doom was set. As we examine [the world](#) we live in, we can see that, short of Jesus returning to rule, there can never be real [goodness](#) or [peace](#). Thus, we follow the command of our Savior to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" ([Matthew 6:10](#)).

Like my friend Bill, we are involved in a harvest, one that is pictured in the Feast of Pentecost. Just as he had to work doggedly for long hours under all kinds of adverse conditions, so do we, although our harvest is far more important. Will we look back on what we will soon accomplish with a feeling of warmth and satisfaction as he did? Will we be able to forget the pain, the drudgery, the setbacks, and the filth, and be glad when the harvest is in?

Indeed, we will ([Isaiah 65:17](#)). The Bible prophesies a great deal about the Millennium, the thousand years of the perfect, loving, peaceful, bounteous, joyous rule of [Jesus Christ](#) on the earth. It will be so wonderful that we will forget all of our troubles as if they were a bad dream. War will end. Famine and disease will disappear. Deception of the people will not be tolerated, and people will know God and His way of life ([Isaiah 11:9](#)). It will truly be as if God created an entirely new earth and heaven—an entirely new way of living (see [Isaiah 65:17-25](#)).

The harvest we have all longed for is almost here, but we have a little more time to labor. We can see signs that the [return of Christ](#) cannot be long in coming, but it is not here quite yet. Even so, as the apostle Paul writes in [Romans 13:11](#), ". . . now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." So what kind of labor are we to be doing? The Bible suggests several things in this regard, and here are a few of the most important:

First, we need to continue to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" ([II Peter 3:18](#)). We can never learn too much about Him and how He lived His life as a man in this world. There is no better example to follow and no better way to seek the [Kingdom of God](#) and His righteousness ([Matthew 6:33](#)).

Second, we must "guard what was committed to [our] trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" ([I Timothy 6:20](#)). In other words, we must protect the truth that God has given us, reject all ideas that contradict it, and live it out as a witness to this world. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world ([Matthew 5:13-16](#)), and letting our light shine before men will bring glory to God.

Third, we must endure all the way to the end ([Matthew 24:13](#); [Mark 13:13](#)), no matter what slings and arrows we have to face in the meantime. There will be scoffers who belittle us and our beliefs. Difficult circumstances will test our mettle. Some will face persecution and even martyrdom in the worst of times ahead. But Jesus says, "By standing firm you will gain life" ([Luke 21:19](#), NIV).

That life—everlasting life in God's Kingdom—is the end of the harvest we eagerly await. At that time, God "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" ([Philippians 3:21](#)), and "we shall always be with the Lord" ([I Thessalonians 4:17](#)). We will then, like my old friend Bill, experience true accomplishment, satisfaction, and [joy](#) in the harvest.

- John O. Reid

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Pentecost and Hope](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

In the account of Simeon in Luke 2:25-30, what did Simeon do to sustain his hope? Simeon's life serves as a precursor to that of God's called-out ones, demonstrating the elements necessary to bring a person to spiritual maturity. The first is hope in God's law. Like Moses, we stand as a kind of mediator, meticulously digesting God's law in order to teach it to the rest of mankind. The second is hope in God's Holy Spirit, which enables us to overcome, produce fruit, and provide witness. The third is hope in God's judgment of the Pentecost offering, representing us, presented to God for inspection,

evaluation, and acceptance. The fourth is hope in being God's firstfruits, the wave loaves that are totally consumed by the Priest in His service, giving us hope that we will indeed be in His Kingdom.

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by Bill Keesee

The church of God has long acknowledged the biblical analogy of a harvest representing the gathering and eventual resurrection of the saints. Bill Keesee speculates that we can perhaps expand our understanding of the harvest analogy to include other aspects of our preparation for God's Kingdom.

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