



Henry Vanderbush

## COUNTING THE COST OF THE HARVEST

I know the Bible says, “Forgetting those things that are behind...” but surely that cannot mean the memories that we have, especially of the old farm days.

As a boy, I guess I can say I loved every season of the year. Springtime was great with the melting of snow and the signs of new life everywhere, all the wild flowers and warmer weather. It seemed in those days, the sky was full of geese going north. I really didn't like the chores that spring brought, like cleaning the pig cobs out of the basement and hauling manure away from the house. It seemed it took so long to get the ground ready for planting, especially when you had nothing else to work with but horses. And then all the rabbits – in the winter the plowing looked like it had just snowed there were so many. And the gophers and the thousands of butterflies and the birds kept you entertained as you plowed day after day with three horses and the saulky plow

But when fall would come and at last the grain was cut and the last shock set up in the field, then came threshing time. To me as

a boy, this was the most exciting time on the farm when my father would walk in the house and announce, “Tomorrow the threshing crew will be here; are we ready?” The cattle had to be put someplace else because all the gates had to be left open, and for two or three days our entire farm was turned into an arena of excitement and activity. It was great. We kids used to get up early to help get the farm ready, and then we would stand beside our long farm driveway as the first bundle wagons began to arrive. It seemed that every wagon was different and every team was a different color. Then finally the great threshing machine would come right up our old farm driveway. The twelve or fourteen bundle wagons were already there, the elevator was in place, ah, it was exciting. I wanted the world to see it.

It was my job when the threshing machine was set up and we started threshing, to push the grain back in the wagon beside the threshing machine, and I would watch as those teams would pull up to the machine and then they would pull the horses to one side so their tails would not get caught in a pulley. And then Francis Bauman would shove that lever ahead on that big Case tractor and the activity began as two men began to unload at the same time. Francis was a master at threshing. He knew how to make a perfect straw pile. Most of the time, though, he was walking around the machine greasing it and checking it. His old father used to sit on the tractor and watch. How that man used to scare me. He was an old man with a handle-bar mustache and built like a brick chicken house, and when he hollered, even

the horses trembled, for all they knew was work, work, work. And once in a while I would let the grain wagon run over because I wouldn't get the spout changed to another wagon in time and that was almost the death penalty. And then once in a while if we were lucky, someone would have a runaway, and that was always exciting as long as I didn't have anything to do with it.

But then would come the great time of day when everything would shut down for dinner, and it seemed that every woman in the community came to help cook the thresher's dinner. Folk, those farm women knew how to cook. Now you forgive me, but this junk we're eating these days, this fast-food junk that's been hashed, smashed, incinerated and embalmed tastes like paste from the wallpaper days. I'm glad I'm as old as I am. There was nothing like the old-fashioned thresher's dinner and the old-fashioned thresher's appetite. How many of you know what I'm talking about? Oh, it was great.

Yes, I know spring had its thrills, but autumn was so many things to so many people. It was the afternoon of a year long day. It was the time of fullness: it was harvest time. It was the time of bounty. The green world would turn into so many bright colors in such a short time. It was a time of movement everywhere in realizing that one morning the windmill would be lined with barn swallows and the next day they were all gone. The blackbirds were bunching up squealing like rusty gates, and

the V-shaped flocks of geese threatened to pull winter in. To the midwest hunter, autumn was his time of year, with the dew of the morning on the grass and the old dog lathered unto excitement he didn't seem to understand. With the haymow pregnant with alfalfa and millet as the smell of hay drifted through the barn, you knew that summer was past and the harvest nearly over.

In a way, autumn says more about life than the blossoms of the spring. At no time of year is more life found in death, even in the fields of unpicked corn. Yes, there's something glorious about a harvest, but there's also something sad about it. No change can be made now; the harvest is past. We would like an increase, but it's too late. If a farmer neglected his fields, the harvest would show it. The sunshine would come and go, but if he neglected the hay crop, he neglected his opportunity. No use to sit and cry, because it's too late. The harvest has come, the summer is ended and it's all over. Nothing is more painful than the time of regrets. The law remains – every man must confront his own harvest. Hell is filled with people today who would give three worlds if they had taken advantage of the time of harvest. Don't reject God's mercy and grace the day will soon be over.

Yes, there's one thing I remember about my boyhood days, and that was the urgency of the harvest. Things happened on our farm that my old dad would never allow to happen any other time of the year. Gates were left open and remained open so

teams and wagons and men would have no obstacle standing in their way. Cattle were put in other pastures. Chores were forgotten until we got around to it, and then members of the family who hadn't milked a cow all year, now pitched in to help because it was harvest time and this always brought an urgency and a fear until the last load of grain was dumped in the elevator and poured into the grain bin, and the door was nailed shut. As darkness settled in and teams and wagons began to leave our farmyard and head for home, we knew it was a day well spent. Another great day in the harvest field was over bringing winter closer to our door, and as the family gathered around the supper table to eat in the light of the old rail kerosene lamp, the big question was always asked, "How is the grain running?" It was then we would all see if our labors during the summer had really paid off. And no matter how long the hours were and how hard the work was, no one really thought a lot about it if the harvest was good, for you see, every activity on the farm worked toward the harvest. All the field work pointed toward the harvest. Oh, how precious the harvest was. Wouldn't it have been foolish to go fishing or take a vacation in harvest time and leave the fields unharvested? Can you not feel the urgency in our Lord's voice as He gave it in the scripture? "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." John 4.35.

“I guess it must have been a dream, but in my mind I was standing in a great apple orchard where every tree was laden with precious fruit ready to be harvested. As I raised my eyes above that great orchard, I saw on the horizon, the black clouds of a gathering storm and I thought, “What might a storm do to this precious fruit?” As I looked at the orchard and the coming storm, I said, “Isn’t there anybody picking fruit? Why isn’t there anybody here?” And then I saw a group of people up in one tree seemingly intent on what they were doing, but no one was picking. I went over and listened and found they were having classes on different kinds of fruit and where to put them – classes on worm control, and how to spot a rotten apple on the inside. I tried to get them to see if they didn’t shut down the classes and get busy and harvest the fruit, all would be lost.

I saw another group of people under another tree, and went over and found they were in an argument about who owned the orchard and the number of trees each would own and who would get the credit for the fruit being picked and whose it would be when it was picked. It seemed no one wanted to cooperate with anyone else. I tried to get them to see that there’s no competition in the orchard. Everyone who reaps will receive wages and you will be well paid for your labor. Just work together and get the harvest. But they all just sat there and stared at me. I found that each little group had a different kind of a picker’s uniform, and since I didn’t have a uniform at all, I was not wanted.

I saw another group who were playing games and laughing and having a hilarious time, but no one was picking. I tried to get them to see the foolishness of this and the seriousness of the harvest, but no one paid any attention. I walked away broken-hearted. Then I saw another group under a large tree. This was the largest group of all. Surely they are getting ready to harvest. But they were all so busy eating and having fellowship, they had absolutely no time to think about a lost harvest. I walked on through the orchard totally overcome with how few cared about the harvest, and then I saw a small group of people working frantically trying to get as much fruit picked before it was too late. Some were on ladders, some were up in the trees, but all were working. I tried to talk to them, but they were too busy with the harvest to visit. I could see the only thing they had on their minds was the harvest. And then it happened! The storm struck in all of its fury. I ducked beneath a tree and hung on, but I watched that precious fruit as it was knocked from the trees. I watched it being ruined and destroyed. Oh, don't say there are a few months the then cometh the harvest."

Oh, one has to be blind not to see the parallel of this simple story. One must be blind not to see the great storm that's gathering on the horizon – the judgment storm – and how few are out in the great harvest field of God. When I realize today's statistics that over ninety-five percent of all church members who call themselves Christians never win one person to Jesus,

can you think of what will happen when the storm comes and all is swept away? And today I stand in the place my father stood many years ago on the old farm, seemingly, counting the cost of the harvest and asking, “How’s the grain running? Did we get it all before the storm broke?”

Dear friend, the storm is about to break on this old world. You say, “What will it be like?” Well, all you have to do is read your Bible. The Bible tells us not to let these days take us unawares. In Matthew 24 and Luke 21, two different writers get the same truth about these last days. In fact, I find that today’s headlines should be an altar call when you know what’s coming. I believe two great events are staring us right in the face today – the rapture of the church, and the coming of the anti-Christ. II Thessalonians 2:7 says, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work...” That means that the spirit of the anti-Christ is already here. And you can see it as you watch events that are taking place.

But notice the rest of the verse. “...only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way”. In other words, the anti-Christ cannot take over until the church is gone.

Notice verse eight of II Thessalonians chapter 2. “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume

with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan...” Who is behind all this? Notice the latter part of that verse. “...with all power and signs and lying wonders.” The anti-Christ will perform signs and lying wonders. In other words, he will work miracles. If you really want to know what’s coming and what it will be like when the church is taken away, you need to read the entire second chapter of II Thessalonians. What a chapter! Isn’t it wonderful that the Bible already tells us what’s coming? In fact, what we see happening in Iraq and that part of the world is playing a great part in the fulfillment of prophecy. Israel is the nation most often mentioned in the Bible. But do you know which nation is second? It is Iraq! However, that is not the name used in the Bible. The names used in the Bible are Babylon, Land of Shinar, and Mesopotamia.

If there ever was a time we need to heed what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19, it is now. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. Notice that this verse does not say where your heart is there shall your treasure be. No, your treasure does not follow your heart; your heart always follows your treasure. Let me ask you, what is your

heart following? That alone will tell you where you will spend eternity.

II Peter 3:10 says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.” Yes, this entire world is headed for judgment. Believe me, the only people who have anything to sing about are those born again and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

As this Faith Builder comes into your home, it is our prayer that its message may grip your heart. How I thank God that as a boy, I knew the way of salvation and I knew that I had to take Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. That’s the only way my name would ever be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Good works, baptism, or church membership will not put it there. Revelation 20:15 declares “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”.

This article is coming to help you to see the great need of being ready to meet the Lord. Believe me, nothing else matters.

If you don't know the Lord as your Saviour, would you just pray this prayer?

Dear Jesus, I believe you died for me and shed your blood for me, and right now I ask you to come into my heart and life. I accept you as my Lord and Saviour. I promise I will live for you the rest of my life. Thank you for accepting me just as I am and making me a child of yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friends, it's harvest time in America. God has given us a day of grace to gather in the harvest. We are hearing of revival fires beginning to burn in places you would never dream of. God is visiting His people. He is giving us the opportunity to repent and turn this country around. There is a day of visitation when the harvest must be gathered before the storm breaks, and we are in that period of history right now. Let us work together to gather in the great and final harvest before the coming of the Lord!

“SAY NOT YE, THERE ARE YET FOUR MONTHS, AND THEN COMETH HARVEST? BEHOLD, I SAY UNTO YOU, LIFT UP YOUR EYES, AND LOOK ON THE FIELDS; FOR THEY ARE WHITE ALREADY TO HARVEST.”