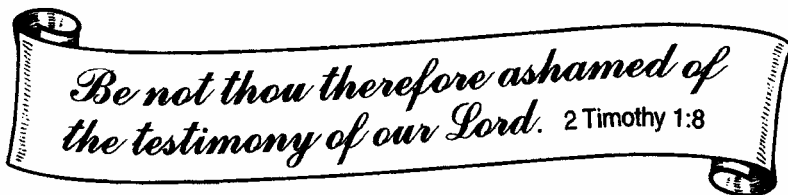


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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The citizens of America will celebrate independence on July 4. We appreciate the freedom of this country. We would not trade this freedom for living under the harsh regimes in many countries of the world. These privileges are an exception to the historical norm for the Christian church. Will it continue?

God wills that man be independent in many ways. We are created as unique individuals. Individual ownership is God's pattern for civil order. The home is designed as an independent unit. We have independent souls for which we are personally accountable.

However, our native thirst for independence militates against dependence on God. At a very young age, children begin to assert their own self-will. Satan appealed to Eve's independence when he offered that she and Adam could be as gods. Her pursuit of independence brought enslavement to her own lusts and the bondage of guilt and sin. The deception continues today.

Independence is as elusive as happiness when pursued apart from God. Our generation, while claiming to be independent, wants the government to do for them what they should do for themselves. A

loss of independence is the inevitable result. American citizens today have many more laws and multiplied taxes than those that incited the Boston Tea Party. Living for self has resulted in a loss of community togetherness, an identity crisis of youth, and a breakdown of family relationships. A selfish desire for independence does not bring fulfillment. Jesus' example of submission to the Father is the key to joy and blessing.

Ever since arriving on the shores of this free country, Mennonites have struggled to preserve dependence on God and the church. Can we as a Christian community keep a sense of dependence necessary for spiritual survival in the midst of these cultural pressures? What must we do to maintain the liberty of dependence?

Cultivate dependence on God. We must voluntarily choose to accept the fact that we are dependent on God. It will deliver us from the bondage of defending our pride. Do we humbly pray from our heart, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Prosperity tends to create a mirage of independence. We have our own house, car, truck, business, or farm. We must diligently teach our children gratefulness to God for these blessings. "In righteousness shalt

thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression" (Isaiah 54:14).

Treasure dependence in the home.

When is the last time we stopped to consider how dependent we are on our parents, siblings, wife, or husband? The world's efforts to preserve individuality and personal freedom prevent many relationships are a result of commitment and submission. Next to faith in God, our Christian homes are the bedrock for emotional stability and spiritual wisdom. Although youth enjoy broadening social interaction, the parental home is the safe harbor. A friend afar will entertain, but a friend near will challenge. Communication technology has devastated many home relationships. Lack of accountability, secrecy, and ease of use that pamper independence have laid pitfalls for unwary souls.

Practice dependence in the brotherhood. Church membership is a voluntary choice to sacrifice our independence and blend with the body of believers. Many covet the security of such a caring support group, but shrink from the cost. The world grasps at the offers of clubs and memberships that do not require sacrifice, but the returns are proportionate. Lodges and secret societies attempt to fill the same need but can never compete with the union of Spirit-convicted, converted, and consecrated saints.

Contrast the blessings of brotherhood assistance with insurance frustrations.

Many churches have lost the vision of the brotherhood. Self-sufficiency, aversion to brotherly criticism, and love of self have taken their toll. This choice of independence terminates God's blessing. "The members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

Recognize dependence in the community. We should not take for granted the benefits we derive from a responsible society. Antigovernment sentiments and conspiracy theories should not get traction in our circles. We must pay taxes conscientiously and obey the laws respectfully. "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

True liberty is found in consecration to Jesus' lordship. Pledging allegiance to Christ the King will free us eternally. We long to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hash spoken it" (Micah 4:4). -BA

UNSPEAKABLE JOY

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). The joy of the Christian passes beyond speech. Deep joy has been compared to a great river flowing along with equable and noiseless motion in contrast to the shallow brook that chatters among its pebbles. It is but a shallow heart that can tell all of its joy.

The Christian's joy is not in need of laughter or words or any outward signs. Mirth is noisy; deep joy is calm, grave, and still. Earthly joys are but light-winged and painted butterflies in the summer skies. In contrast to earthly joy, true Christian joy can be likened to a strong-pinioned eagle soaring in the sunlight as it rises toward God.

Unlike the iridescent bubble that bursts at a touch, true Christian joy is solid and permanent. It expresses itself by sitting calmly at the Master's feet and moves not in its deep restfulness; only the light in the eyes and the holy glow on the still face tell the depth of the blessedness. Earth's joys are as the crackling of thorns; Christian joy burns steadily. It is touched by the glory of that which nourishes it. As Stephen's face glowed like an angel's from the reflected light of the open heavens, so our joy can be

touched with heaven's own light. Our common emotion can be transfigured into the likeness of the lofty hopes and visions on which it is nourished.

Exercising faith in the unseen Christ brings joy. The very attitude of trust breathes calm gladness over the heart. It is always blessed to lean on One whom we love. There is rest in casting our burdens on Him. Anxiety and care darken the face and sadden the soul when we have none, but ourselves, to rely upon. But trust in our Lord makes us glad, as a child safe in its mother's arms or a wife guarded by her loving husband. The joy that results from placing our trust in God is enhanced as we relate to others who also trust in God.

As we trust in Christ, we rely on absolute perfection and permanence and power, making our joy full and abiding. To occupy our mind and heart with Him is joy. As a warm thrill of gladness fills loving souls parted from one another when they think of each other, so a bright light of joy is kindled at our remembrance of Christ as we trust in Him.

The outworking of faith produces joy. Faith brings the yielding of the will, and that produces joy. Faith includes the consciousness of union with His divine love and power, and that is joy. Faith rises to walk

in heavenly places, and that is joy. Faith unites the soul with Jesus, and that is joy. Christian joy is contemporaneous with the active exercise of our faith. We can rejoice evermore.

Salvation, which is the consequence of faith, brings joy. Faith and joy will become stronger, and, as they grow, salvation will be

more fully possessed. The consciousness of forgiveness and the assurance that all the sky is clear—that nowhere in the universe of things present or future is any cloud or storm that need destroy our rest—that is joy. It is "joy unspeakable and full of glory."
Brother Paul.

Joy Unspeakable

I have found His grace is all complete,
He supplieth ev'ry need;
While I sit and learn at Jesus' feet,
I am free, yes, free indeed.

I have found the joy no tongue can tell,
How its waves of glory roll!
It is like a great o'erflowing well,
Springing up within my soul.

It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,
Full of glory, full of glory;
It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,
Oh, the half has never yet been told. —B.E.W.



"Run Not With Them"

The ungodly run with the world. The Christian walks with Christ. Running to excess seems legitimate to those who seek worldly satisfaction. But the excesses of carnal man should not attract the attention of the Christian; much less should he indulge in them.

Understanding the Terms

The four words of our title appear to be a command, but the clause in its context reads, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (1 Peter 4:4). They refers to the ungodly and ye

to God's people. The writer makes a sharp contrast between the "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" of the ungodly and the soberness, watchfulness, and prayerfulness of the Christian. As God's people today, we need to recognize these sinful excesses and continually separate ourselves from this evil world.

Identifying the Excesses

The pleasure-seeking mania has infected our world today. Men and women run to amusement parks, theaters, parties, dances, organized ball games, and music shows. Carnal man hurries from one high to the next thrill. The financial cost to maintain this lifestyle seems to have little effect on this mad rush. People spend untold thousands of dollars on recreational vehicles, motorcycles, boating equipment, hunting gear, and entertainment paraphernalia—all in the search for fulfillment in life. The social exchange that accompanies these supposed delights is usually less than wholesome, and is sometimes immoral. Although hunting, for example, could be possibly done in moderation to the glory of God, the social exchange that generally accompanies this type of activity is often detrimental to our spiritual welfare.

The fashions of the day have captured the hearts of many—both the

younger and the older. The selfish and conceited heart longs for the supposed beauty and applause of the stage models. When one fad loses its appeal, man immediately pursues the next, no matter what the cost or sacrifice.

How might these excesses touch us in subtle ways even in our separated way of life? How can we fortify ourselves against the attitudes and actions of the ungodly today?

Reaffirming Our Position

Give God His rightful place. When our attention is on God, we are less likely to be distracted by the world. As we gaze on His face through worship, the glamour of the world loses its attraction. The more time we spend with God, the less time we have to become entangled with the world.

Allow God to rectify the heart. To rectify is to set right again. When the heart is right, the actions will also be right. The mirage of earthly pleasure vanishes when the Holy Spirit fills the heart. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). Affection for things of the world and true love for God cannot coexist.

Be devoted to the work of the church. Those who occupy themselves with the service opportunities of the church have little time or energy to run after the world. Let the world rush by! We

love to serve Christ through the church!

Allow Christian stewardship to temper spending. Should the Christian really be spending money on expensive hunting equipment? Do elaborate motor homes and extended vacations really fit with Christian temperance? Could not the hundreds of dollars spent on that fastest, latest personal computer be better given to the Lord's work than wasted on ourselves? Is not the rush for the latest model cars with all the attractive features an excess that we want to avoid?

Recognize the social snares that accompany the pleasure-seeking mentality. The attitudes and the actions of a worldly mentality will wrongly influence the unsuspecting. Somehow we tend to think that these social influences will not affect us. This assumption itself may even be our first step in running toward the world. Those who run with the world will become like the world. Should not our goal be to have our social needs met primarily within the church?

Be alert to subtle shifts toward worldliness. Do I secretly enjoy indulging in lustful and impure thought patterns? Am I allowing my apostate relatives and friends to influence me and my family to gradually lay down Biblical practice and traditions? Am I spending time with the unwholesome in the

daily newspaper or some magazine'? Do I waste time playing games on the cell phone or computer even though I know I should not? Do I follow the shifting hairstyles of the day? An affirmative answer to any of these questions indicates an illicit love for the world.

Recognize the intensity of pressures that youth face. Guiding our youth in this day requires parents with vigilance and godly wisdom. We should be committed to providing work for them in a safe environment. We need to carefully meet their social needs through the home and help them avoid the unwholesome youth social activities that beckon. We need to carefully guard our own and our children's music interests, choosing music that complements the worship hymns of the church. To develop a taste for borderline or questionable music will lead us to running with the world.

Find true joy and satisfaction in identifying with God and His people. While others may consider our lifestyle drab and uninteresting, we know the opposite is true. As the world rushes on in its headlong pursuit of pleasure and excess, we find fulfillment in the stately walk of the Christian life and fall in step with our brethren and sisters in the Lord.

Brother Nathan.

Adding to the Kingdom.

Child Care Committee Report

Our hearts are full of compassion for the many children who are not privileged to enjoy a happy Christian home life. There are so many children who are victims of broken homes. The pain and grief of separated parents can be more difficult than bereavement. Arguments and fighting are the norm in many homes, and children grow up with little or no love and discipline.

I am so grateful for the home life that I had. I never questioned the love of my parents. Their primary desire was that each of us children would grow to love and serve the Lord. Every day my father audibly prayed for us. Esther, as a young girl, became the foster or adopted daughter of Mordecai. Lot was taken into Abram's home after his father Haran died. Had it not been for Mordecai and Abram, the story of Esther and Lot would have been quite different.

I am touched with the attention that Jesus gave the little children, even though His disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

The Child Care Committee began in 1980 under the direction of the Mission Board. The first four children were placed in three separate foster homes on September 29, 1980. Through these foster home placements and other leads, the Child Care Committee has received many requests for homes for children. Since 1980 approximately one hundred twelve children have been placed in foster homes. Also, there have been numerous requests for homes for older children, which we were not able to meet.

Many foster children have had little exposure to church life, especially a Biblical, separated church life. They often know very little about the Bible. We are impressed how quickly they learn the Bible stories and songs we sing. They learn to sit quietly and reverently during daily family worship and the hours of church services.

The natural parents consent to have their children dress like our children and have no exposure to television or radio. They have the privilege to visit with their children once a month. These visits are often held in one of our schools and arranged by a committee member, who serves as a home consultant. Parents are normally pleased to see the improved behavior and discipline of their children.

Quite a number of these children have grown and become Christians.

Some have found life companions from among our church group and have families of their own. One of the natural parents attended the baptismal service and wedding of her child.

We are thankful for those who have opened their homes for foster children. In most cases, the foster parents find it very difficult to give up their foster child when the natural parents request them back again.

Pray for the foster parents, the natural parents, the children, and the Committee as we endeavor to provide godly homes for these needy children.



We Shall Shine As the Stars

We may tarry a while here as strangers,
Unnoticed by those who pass by;
But the Saviour will crown us in glory,
To shine as the stars of the sky.

We may never be rich in earth's treasures,
Nor rise on the ladder of fame;
But the saints will at last be rewarded,
Made rich in Immanuel's name.

We shall shine as the stars of the morning,
With Jesus the crucified one;
We shall rise to be like Him forever,
Eternally shine as the sun.

—J. W. V.



Cultivating Godly Character (Part 1)

The Guilelessness of Nathanael

Fellow Christians, meet Nathanael! This Bible character from Cana of Galilee possessed a challenging characteristic to cultivate in our Christian lives. Jesus commended Nathanael's frank, open spirit by praising him as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

When Philip shared his discovery of the Messiah with Nathanael, he responded, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" What an unlikely place for a king to emerge from! Galileans, including the poor of Nazareth, were held in contempt by the people of Judea for their rough dialect and unsophisticated manners. Nathanael's frank question was likely a humble admission of the unworthiness of his country to be the origin of the Messiah.

Nathanael was an Israelite from the inside out. While Jesus called some of Nathanael's fellow countrymen "whited sepulchres," this devout Jew was an "Israelite indeed." Nathanael was not satisfied to float along on his Jewish heritage; he lived in the true spirit of it. Could Jesus say of us, "Behold, a Christian indeed"? Or do we wear our Christian profession as a jacket, convenient to wear in a spiritual climate but easy to shed when the peer pressure gets too warm? Hypocrisy is absent in a guileless person.

Personal integrity and trustworthiness identify a guileless individual. He has a habit of living above reproach. Pretenders and "benchwarmers" find no common ground with Nathanael. Is my profession a genuine expression of my heart? Would the Master be pleased to hold up my driving habits as an example of a "Christian indeed"? Is my thought life pure, characteristic of personal integrity? Can my parents be relaxed when I leave for three weeks of Bible school?

Jesus praised Nathanael's life as an example to others. He expected that Nathanael would not allow this public commendation to go to his head. Contrast this to a haughty Pharisee praying on the street corner. Oh, that we would copy Nathanael's unassuming manner!

Nathanael's secret to guileless living lay in his spiritual vision. According to Oriental custom, the shade of the fig tree provided a place under which one could meditate or visit with friends. Perhaps this was his prayer closet, his place of communion with God. Evidently, this earnest seeker was well acquainted with the prophetic Word, because he declared Jesus to be "the Son of God ... the King of Israel." He was looking for this long-awaited Messiah to come. "Those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17)

God needs men like Nathanael to work in His kingdom. Many believe that Nathanael was Bartholomew, one of the twelve disciples. No matter where Nathanael labored in God's vineyard, this quality of guilelessness was surely a challenge and inspiration to others. Am I a "Nathanael"?

Brother Daniel.



PRAYER POINT

*“The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much”*

***Thank God for government officials that
grant us the religious freedom we enjoy***

***Than the Lord for faithful brothers and sisters who
provoke us to love and good works
by their consistent example***

