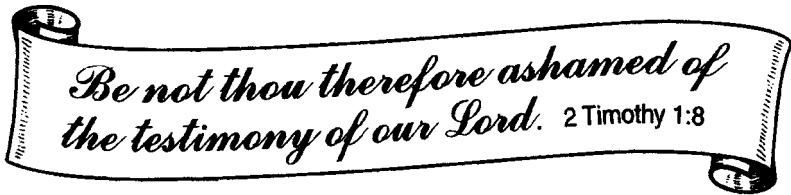


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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Just a glimpse of the news headlines informs us that we live in troublesome times ("Earthquake in Nepal" "Terrorists Seize . . ." "Court Overturns . . ."). Natural disasters, terrorist groups, and regional strifes vex the nations. Meanwhile violence, racial conflict, and moral decadence sap the strength and vitality of societies around the world.

But Isaac Watts declared of God, "Thine eternal thought moves on / Thine undisturbed affairs." God's affairs are indeed undisturbed even though evil prevails, morals decline, and violence fills the earth.

God's affairs are undisturbed, for He knows the end from the beginning. He is never surprised by the events on earth. Jesus told us to expect wars, earthquakes, and abounding iniquity.

God's affairs are undisturbed because God is sovereign. God created man a free agent to determine his own destiny. Yet, in His sovereignty, the activities of men and nations fit into and fulfill His ultimate purposes. This world is not spiraling out of God's control even though nations, rivaling each other, rise and fall; evil seems to prevail; and sinful man is having his day. God uses even the wrath of sinful men to accomplish His purposes. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10).

God is bringing this world to its intended end. While Satan and his forces, kings and presidents, terrorist groups, and false teachers seem to hold power over peoples and regions, none of these are ultimately in control. God's Word declares the conclusion. Christ "must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:25, 28).

God's affairs are undisturbed, for He is Judge of all. "Violent perverting of judgment and justice" on the earth will continue, but "he that is higher than the highest regardeth" (Ecclesiastes 5:8). God will ultimately judge the world in absolute righteousness. In that day, sin will be punished, truth will triumph, and God and His people will be forever vindicated.

Because God's affairs are undisturbed, His children have confidence in Him. In light of current developments, we may wonder what the future will hold for those who teach and obey the Bible. But we are not distraught. We trust the unknown future to our known God. We know not what difficulties

may lay in the pathway ahead, but we trust Him to be our Light on the road that leads to our heavenly home. We commit our cares to the One who cares for His own.

Because God's affairs are undisturbed, His children move with His eternal thought—the salvation of souls. Like their Father, they are not willing that any should perish. Our calling to evangelize and proclaim the Gospel should affect our everyday mentality and activities.

The children of God anticipate the future. Our vision encompasses more than the natural eye perceives. It sees beyond the veil of time into eternity and gives us a hope that anchors our souls. The eye of faith focuses on the unfading inheritance. With that perspective shining on the developments in the world, the scenes on earth remind us to look up for our redemption is drawing near!

Great God, how infinite art Thou!
How poor and weak are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee.
Our lives through various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,
While Thine eternal thought moves on
Thine undisturbed affairs.
-Isaac Watts



Honour – The Foundation of Parent-Child Relationships

The fifth of the Ten Commandments is "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Deuteronomy 5:16). This principle is foundational to all proper human relationships. Honor means that children respect and obey their parents.

Our children come into our homes with a propensity to go wrong. "They go astray as soon as they be born" (Psalm 58:3). They do not need to be taught to lie or to disobey their parents. They are self-centered and must be taught not to snatch things from others. Honor is a characteristic that must be instilled in our children; they will not learn it by accident.

How do parents instill honor in their children?

God said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children ... after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD" (Genesis 18:19). God knew that Abraham would enforce right behavior in his family. As parents we must do the same.

Many parents feel that acting with authority and giving instruction that directs behavior distances their children from them. Society, in general, minimizes the Scriptural foundations of honor, authority, and obedience. Many people emphasize a relationship built solely on love and communication. Love and communication are indeed essential. Abraham and Isaac communicated on the way up Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). That exchange may have helped Isaac to surrender himself on the altar that day. But Eli's experience with his sons (1 Samuel 2:23-25) proves that a love that only communicates is not enough. Eli's sons did not fear God's judgment because Eli never fulfilled his responsibility in punishing his sons.

Proper discipline is an expression of parental love. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24). When parents fail to exercise proper authority, they lose the respect of their children, and parent-child relationships suffer.

Parents should have clearly defined and consistently enforced rules to help their children to develop honor and respect. One family lived along a busy road. Across the road, big trucks loaded and unloaded. The children were kept from harm by having a clearly defined play area behind a sidewalk that went from the house to the barn. Any child who crossed the sidewalk was punished each time he crossed. In this way the sidewalk became as good as a fence.

The Bible frequently uses the term the rod in relation to correcting and punishing children. The properly used rod (corporal punishment) will give a sharp sting of pain, but will not inflict lingering pain or physical damage. Child training is more effective if it is started soon enough. The word *betimes* (Proverbs 13:24) means "early and diligently." Parents need to use good judgment with small children. A child should not be punished for crying from fear or physical discomfort. However, even the small child who displays his temper by making himself stiff and incontinent in his mother's arms needs to learn to submit to his mother's wishes. Beginning early means we do not allow children to develop any undesirable habit even though it appears cute and funny. At an early age a child should learn that no means stop right now.

Punishment for a misdeed should be given promptly by the parent who is present. The young child cannot associate the punishment with the misdeed

nearly as well if too much time has elapsed between the misdeed and the punishment. If punishment is always given by the same parent, instilling honor may be more difficult.

Love needs to direct parents in making rules and giving punishments. The purpose of rules and punishment is to keep children from harm and to help them develop good character. Punishment that is given according to the amount of parental humiliation or inconvenience experienced will likely be unfair and unduly harsh. We should investigate the incident enough to make sure there is sufficient reason to give a punishment.

Although the rod is a necessary and effective tool, other forms of discipline, such as withholding privileges, can also be effective. If corporal punishment is used for every little misdeed, it could become ineffective. A stern look or a word of disapproval may stop wrong behavior if the rod has been properly used

As children mature, they increasingly think and reason for themselves. However, parents must still give the needed guidance and restraint. Parents need to explain why they expect certain behavior. Demanding parents who fail to give good reasons for their requirements will fail to develop honor in their children as surely as those who fail to discipline their children.

How do children and youth show honor to their parents?

Children honor their parents by using respectable terms. Deference is expressed by willing and complete obedience to parental commands.

Honor goes beyond simple obedience to spoken commands. The youth who does not join his friends in a certain activity because he knows that his parents would disapprove honors his parents. Sometimes a youth is keenly disappointed by a parental decision. He honors his parents by not reflecting against them if he must tell his friends about that decision.

Young people honor their parents by doing those things they know their parents want to have done without waiting to be told to do them. They honor their parents by having the personal conviction that enables them to make right decisions when they are not under parental supervision.

"Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (Proverbs 29:17). This verse helps us understand how parental guidance and youthful honor for parents enhance good parent-child relationships.

Brother Kenneth



AVOIDING THE SNARE OF MATERIALISM

Just how dangerous is the threat of materialism? What does the word materialism mean? Webster's definition includes "the tendency to be more concerned with material than spiritual or intellectual goals or values." Perhaps the first step in evaluating the threat is to evaluate how much "material" we have.

How rich are we? Do those of us in North America live nearly like the upper middle class of society? We have one vehicle, perhaps two or more. We have enough money in the bank, or at least the buying power, to buy the things we really want. Many of us have an extra set of dishes and utensils for company use. We may even have rooms of the house reserved just for guests. Our closets are probably well stocked with clothing. We typically eat three solid meals a day. How often do we enjoy ice cream, chocolates, or whatever is our favorite food? If we grow tired of the food we have, we can choose from a large selection of foods from around the globe. Compare this abundance to the multitudes around the world whose transportation is their two legs, who live in a one- or two-room house, and who eat one satisfying meal a day—if they are fortunate. We are among the richest 5 percent of the world's population. "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings ... as my beloved sons I warn you" (1 Corinthians 4:8, 14). This warning certainly applies to us.

The danger of materialism is emphasized by the numerous Scriptures that warn us of the dangers of riches. Man's tendency is to trust in riches. In Mark 10:23, 24, Jesus equates having riches with trusting in them. But He concludes with the fact that God is able to save the rich. We who have abundance are specifically warned not to "trust in uncertain riches" (1 Timothy 6:17). Riches bring power. Riches can save situations and solve problems. But the security of wealth is uncertain. "For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:5).

History also proves that man's tendency is to become materialistic when wealth accumulates. The Dutch Mennonites became wealthy and were assimilated into their culture. The Russian Mennonites became wealthy also and lost their godliness. Many, especially the wealthier ones, failed to see the danger approaching and lost their lives in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, many of their poorer brethren had fled the country several years previously. Even American Mennonite history is filled with

examples of individuals and church groups who lost out spiritually. Materialism was definitely a part of the downward course. Having seen the danger, how do we avoid materialism?

Contentment and thankfulness are two keys in avoiding materialism. A materialistic attitude is consumed with getting more things for self. Contentment, on the other hand, directs our focus to thankfulness, satisfaction, and quiet pleasure in what God has given us. Thankfulness moves us from complaining about what we do not have to rejoicing in the many blessings we do have. We are commanded to be content with food and raiment. How many times do we pine for things far less necessary than our daily bread? May we strive to learn "in whatsoever state [we are], therewith to be content."

Another antidote for materialism is following Christ's example of giving cheerfully for the benefit of others. Christ, though rich, became poor that we may be rich. Christ had all, but came to earth where He practiced servanthood and endured crucifixion so that we, who had nothing, may gain everything. Let us, in gratitude, follow His example. Instead of seeking to accumulate earthly things, let us spend our energy blessing others. Our duty is to follow the example of the widow with two mites. Just as she gave all she had, we too should give not only our leftovers and abundance but also our living—even all that we have—to the furtherance of Christ's kingdom. We should be actively helping our needy brother and diligently laboring to win souls for Christ.

Also, we must evaluate what our treasure is, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34). Do earthly things move our hearts more than spiritual things? Do we find Sunday a welcome day of worship? Or is it a day to recuperate from our week of materialistic labor? Do we anxiously wait for the day to pass so we can continue our labors? Do we thirst for God and feed deeply at His Word in our personal devotions, or are we careful and troubled about many things? Do we meditate on God, anticipate glory, and strive to turn eyes upward as we go through each workday; or are we too busy? Are we devoted to the pursuit of heaven, or are our eyes fixed on the next shovelful of earth that we hope to obtain? Where is our treasure and where is our heart?

An understanding and consciousness of God's ownership and our stewardship responsibilities help us to view the material properly. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Material possessions are not to gratify us but to glorify God. This understanding helps us relate to our possessions "as though [we] possessed not"(1 Corinthians 7:30). We

view possessions as not ours but God's, to be used by Him and for Him. This means that our goods are available to meet needs in the brotherhood and in the community.

In summary, we should live with the sobering reality that these earthly things can be laid up in store for our blessing in eternity. If not transferred to our heavenly account, they will be "burned up" with "fervent heat" at the end of the world, and we will suffer eternally for abusing God's gifts.

Brother Clarence



First Things (Part 1)

The Cost of Discipleship

"For which of you, intending to build a tower,
sitteth not down first and counteth the cost;
whether he have sufficient to finish it?"

Luke 14:28

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh prepared to fly from New York to Paris, something no one else had been able to do. He whittled every detail of the flight down to bare necessities. One man, one engine, no radio, no parachute, no navigation lights, no sextant, and no gas gauge. He even trimmed the margins of his charts to reduce every ounce of extra weight. His theory was a gas tank, a man, and a wing. He counted the cost of the flight and succeeded.

Undertaking significant enterprises demands forethought.

Jesus explained that if men wish to finish building towers, defeat enemy armies, or be His disciples, they must first count the cost. He is calling us to consider this truth: His disciples must be willing to forsake any earthly thing to be successful. So how much might that cost?

Possibly the greatest cost of discipleship is the loss of one's life.

The early Christian martyrs come to mind, but that was long ago. Christians in politically tumultuous countries, however, are still giving their lives because they are not ashamed to be known as disciples of Christ. One of them said, "We die only once. It may as well be for Christ." Have you counted this cost?

There are more. Daniel knew that praying to the God of heaven was disobedience to the monarch. But when he counted the cost, he found he could not afford not to pray. Even a night in the lions' den did not make him reconsider. One young lady wore a veiling and found that the cost to her was home and family. They said, "Leave! We don't want such an odd-looking daughter around here."

What has discipleship cost you? Does your electronic technology make you more or less effective as a disciple of Christ? Will you first choose principles even if doing so costs you your peers? Will you read God's Word first and then the farm or trade magazines? Will you volunteer for street meeting even if it costs you a day's wages? Will you say yes to school teaching even though you have a better paying job? Will you take time to intercede in prayer even if it costs you sleep?

An acquaintance once told me about his expensive, high performance car that he could no longer afford to own. The cost of insurance and repairs was too high. He could afford to buy it, but he could not afford to keep it. Discipleship is not a once-and-done transaction either. The cost continues through life. Alas, too many fail to count the continuing cost and bankrupt themselves spiritually!

Brother John

Though it may cost me friends and home,
I will be true to Thee;
Cause me in lands afar to roam,
I will be true to Thee.



PRAYER POINT

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

Pray for the Christian Schoolteachers' Instruction Course at Ashland. This program, established in 1971, parallels the revival of the Christian day school movement.

Pray that this program may clearly communicate a Scriptural philosophy of education that rejects modern secular and humanistic methods.

Pray for the world leaders as they respond to the rise of international terrorism. Many people are suffering and dying under political and religious violence.

Pray that God would continue to direct the affairs of nations under His sovereign rule and wisdom.

Pray for the newly formed Cumberland District of the EPMC. The districts now total nine.

Pray for a continuing spirit of churchwide cohesion as the church prospers under the blessing of the Lord.

Thank the Lord for national liberties and freedoms. These constitutional privileges provide both material and spiritual opportunities. Genuine gratefulness will focus first on the spiritual and eternal values.

