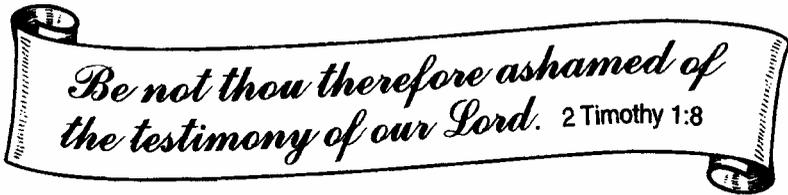


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH  
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## Editorial.

### *Party To Sin.*

Sin is a personal transgression against the righteousness of God, and every soul shall stand in judgment for his own works. How then could we be partakers of other men's sins as Paul warned Timothy? "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22). To be a partaker means "to share." Paul was warning, "Do not impulsively ordain men lest in doing so you become guilty of sanctioning their sin or error." Guilt may be incurred if wrong is encouraged as right. Church leaders are accountable to establish role models that will promote righteousness.

Parents, schoolteachers, board members, and church leaders should take heed. To intentionally overlook sin makes us party to the sin. We share the guilt. We will share the judgment. Scolding did not absolve Eli's accountability for the vileness of his sons. Permitted sin is sanctioned sin.

Anyone who hides the sin of another becomes party to his error. God pronounced a curse on Israel "if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not" (Leviticus 20:4). The story of Achan illustrates the collective curse that hidden sin brings upon a congregation. The whole congregation was weak and fell prey to the enemy because of Achan's sin in their midst.

Fall council in preparation for Communion is upon us. There is pressure to shift away from the important aspect of group examination. Pietism denies that one's personal relationship with God is dependent on the holiness of the body. However, if we have knowledge of hidden sin in a brother's life, we are partaker of his sin. Peter rebuked Sapphira, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord'?" (Acts 5:9). We cannot confess peace with God if we help our brother hide his sin.

Associations with those who do wrong will make us party to their sin. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17). An unequal yoke with the world in business or social life makes us party to their sin. Jehoshaphat almost lost his life for the alliance he had with the ungodly (2 Chronicles 18). Many spiritual lives have been lost for the financial advantage of affinity with the world. Partnership with the world cannot be an option to solve the Internet question.

The encouragement or support of one who is doing wrong makes us party to their error. "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 11). Our Rules and Discipline echoes this same thought when it states, "Those members who stand by such who are out of fellowship place themselves in the same state."

We should not encourage wrong by passing it along. Is relaying a bad joke less evil than making it? Is there any difference between buying a carnal recording or simply passing it along? Many books should be burned rather than shared. If we pass along an item that weakens the spiritual life of our brother, we carry the accountability of making him partaker of our sin. Sin is never a bargain, even if it is secondhand.

God forbid that we would be so spiritually dead that we pressure others to not expose our sin. We make them sin in doing so. "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2).

There is a widening gap between the world and the sanctified Christian. We should not, however, forget the brotherhood of man. "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (Malachi 2:10). God holds us accountable as watchmen on the wall of the world, to give warning of impending judgment. If we stand silently by as our neighbors go down the road to perdition, are we not partakers of their sins? The Spirit desires to "reprove the world of sin" through our blameless life and vocal testimony. "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dolt not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 33:8).

"Keep thyself pure"!

—BAS



### *Preaching Christ of Goodwill.*

Paul, while imprisoned at Rome, wrote to the Philippians regarding the "furtherance of the gospel." He observed, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife." These persons mistakenly thought Paul's preaching, like theirs, was for personal recognition. With Paul in prison, they could get the credit for the spread of the Gospel—and "add affliction to [his] bonds." But they were wrong. Instead, he rejoiced that "Christ is preached"

(Philippians 1:12-18).

There were others, however, who preached Christ "of good will." They knew that his focus, motivation, and goals were for the "defence of the gospel." He coveted the salvation of souls, not the fulfillment of personal ambition.

If we desire to be true fellow helpers in "the furtherance of the gospel," we too must preach Christ, and we must do so with love and goodwill—toward our fellow laborers and toward those we desire to reach with the Gospel.

### ***Preaching Christ.***

To "preach Christ" is indeed the work of every believer. No one is exempt. Every believer has been ordained as an ambassador of Christ, his King. Jesus' parting words at His ascension were, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

To "preach Christ" requires boldness (Philippians 1:20). This boldness is not a proud arrogance that instigates contention and confusion. It is rather a fearless confidence, characterized by clarity and openness. With all the uncertainties of today's world, the secular man's foundations are shaky. Today's world needs a forthright proclamation and demonstration of Gospel truth. We must not fail men, but constantly sound out (I Thessalonians 1:8) the message through unashamed verbal testimony.

To "preach Christ" effectively, we must be clearly identified as His disciples. Paul was determined that "Christ shall be magnified in my body." Our lives either preach Christ or subtract from the message. This demands that our countenance, our dress, our everyday speech, our actions and reactions all consistently bear testimony that we are followers of Jesus Christ.

To "preach Christ" involves untiring toil. Perhaps we see little or no fruit from our labors. When there seem to be so few responses to the Gospel, when those we are trying to reach seem not to care about the needs of their own souls—what then? We labor on! God told Isaiah to preach until there was no one left for whom to preach (Isaiah 6:11). Preaching Christ must be the consuming passion of every believer. We may never relax and think, "I've done my part; I've fulfilled my duty. Let others spread the message." When Jesus commanded His followers to spread the Gospel message, He promised, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Your work and mine, fellow ambassador, is not yet done. We must keep on preaching Christ!

### ***With Goodwill Toward Fellow Laborers***

In the presentation of the Gospel message, there may not be a spirit of con-

test or competition. We serve in differing capacities and even in separate fields of labor within the great vineyard of the Lord, yet we strive together for the salvation of souls and the furtherance of the Master's kingdom. We do not each have our own little serfdom to defend or promote.

Those who accept the call to salvation are won to Christ, not to us, the human evangelists. Therefore we are never in competition for souls. We are not rivals, each seeking to win first the friendship of the visitor at church so that he is my "client." Unlike children filling their bags at a candy scramble, we do not claim as our own those we are trying to help.

Consequently, when individuals show interest in the message, it is not long until we introduce them to fellow believers. While the one who made the initial contact usually stays in touch with the seeking soul, he does not snub his brethren with a "keep your distance, this is my project" attitude. Just as the Good Samaritan brought his man to the inn (Luke 10:34), we likewise bring those we are trying to help to the spiritual inn, the church. Here they receive multiplied spiritual blessings—far more than we can give personally.

Though we labor separately, and perhaps even individually, in spreading the Gospel message, we must view our work as one work—for indeed it is. We will then, like Paul, "preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). And we will understand and appreciate that just as we have entered into the labors of others (John 4:38), so others also will enter into our labors. We will then concur with the laborer in Robert Frost's poem: "Men work together, whether they work together or apart."\*

### ***With Goodwill Toward the Lost***

Duty compels us to declare the Gospel message. 'A dispensation of the gospel' (1 Corinthians 9:17) is committed unto each of us. Therefore we each should identify with Paul's testimony in 1 Corinthians 9:16: "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."

But is duty alone a sufficient motivation? There is and must be a loftier motivation: love. Granted, we cannot escape our humanity. There may be times when weariness of toil and dimness of vision dampen our zeal. It then takes the urgency of duty to keep us at our task. Nevertheless, in this momentous task of reaching out to the lost, love, rather than duty, should be our primary motivation.

"The love of Christ constraineth [takes hold of] us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Christ's love shines through the believer into the lives of the lost. A caring heart—or the lack of it—will definitely shine through our efforts. A caring

heart shows interest in the ones we are trying to reach with the Gospel. We must be interested enough to meet them where they are in their spiritual understanding—or lack of understanding. Because this work requires sincere love and genuine interest, it is time consuming. It takes time—time to listen, time to explain, and time to nurture the budding faith. We must not be like the salesman who gives his pitch, makes a sale, and moves on to the next prospect.

If our presentation of the Gospel is indeed motivated by love and goodwill, we will gladly and willingly impart of ourselves. Apostle Paul testified, "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Are we willing to be inconvenienced? Are we ready to sacrifice?

When our hearts burn with goodwill, we will enter evangelistic labors with an attitude of hope and expectation. Let us each test ourselves: How do I really view the monthly distribution of the Living Waters or the scheduled visit to the prison? With what attitude do I participate in street meetings? Do I really expect anyone to be interested in what we have to offer? Do I enter a work of this nature with a sense of doing my duty, or do I approach this work with burden and vision? Am I burdened with the prospect of the lost dying unsaved, yet bright with the anticipation of influencing an eternal soul—today? Do I return home with a sense of accomplishment for having done my part, or do I return with a growing awareness of the opportunities I have to reach souls for Christ? Do I have keen interest in helping the next person I meet to find the true answers to life's perplexing questions? In other words, am I merely doing my evangelistic duty, or am I trying to win individuals? Do I focus on doing the work or on winning the souls'?

We meet our best opportunities to touch the world for Christ as we rub shoulders with others in our everyday walk of life. To have organized evangelistic efforts is indeed a worthy work. But those who know us in our work clothing know us best. There the Gospel is "known and read of all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2). Do I demonstrate a Christ-like spirit of goodwill in every relationship? Do I portray a holy, heavenly countenance in every encounter? Is every area of my life conformed to the Gospel I proclaim? A spirit of goodwill enables us to see the potential of each soul. Every human being is viewed as a candidate for heavenly citizenship. We see beyond what he is to what he can be by the grace of God. Those who have

such an outlook know no bounds of class or race. They are not judgmental and do not readily stereotype an individual or a group. They do not view persons as being beyond hope. Instead, they endeavor to keep up the contact, and they keep praying. To whatever extent they are able, they "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

When our vision of eternity affects our daily perspective of life, we will be preaching Christ of goodwill. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing"? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thessalonians 2:19).  
*Brother Scott.*



### *Church Committee Report - Congregational Cottage Meetings*

By definition, a cottage meeting is an assembly in a small, single-storied country house. As we use the term, it is a service of singing and Bible study held in a private residence. A singing service should include a short Bible reading with comments, and a Bible study should include at least one song.

What response do we expect if we ask our neighbor, "Would you be interested in a cottage meeting in your home?" The response may be, "Cottage meeting? What's that?" This term may not communicate very well what we actually have in mind. Instead, we could ask, "Would you be open to some of our church friends coming for a hymn sing and short Bible reading?"

Who should we consider asking for such a service? We should remember members of our own church who are unable to go to church or who are very limited in going away. We should be alert to those facing special needs, such as the elderly, the sick, or those experiencing reverses. We should be diligent in developing contacts with those that express spiritual interest and ask about our beliefs.

The purpose of a service with professing Christians is to encourage and challenge. The service may be more evangelistic with those who do not profess faith in God.

Following are some tips for cottage meeting planning and procedure.

1. Communicate clearly with the folks you are contacting. Check back with them before the meeting to make sure they remember the plans.
  2. Know how much room the host has available. Inform the host of the group size. Especially for the first time, keep your group small.
  3. Discuss your usual procedure ahead of time. If the host prefers that the group sit, you may need to supply folding chairs. This may limit the group size.
  4. Assign someone to bring songbooks and chairs. It is important to have more than enough.
  5. For a small group, you may need to select the participants. Consider the parts for singing, the ratio of children to adults, and suchlike. Make sure, however, that each family is impartially included sooner or later.
  6. Be considerate of your host's hospitality. After the service is over, visiting with them for a short time may be appreciated. But visiting among your own people should be kept brief.
  7. A Bible study should focus on basic themes and passages for those new to the faith. A regular continued study should follow a systematic approach. Be open to subjects that interest the host.
  8. Keep good records. They are valuable in planning future activities.
- "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

*Br. K.M. for the Church Committee.*



### *Cultivating Godly Character (Part 3)* *The Forgiveness of Joseph*

Joseph's brothers were terrified. Standing before them was their brother, Joseph, the second most powerful man in all Egypt. Their past treachery had finally caught up with them. But no! What was Joseph saying? "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." No hint of bitterness. No scathing words. What can we learn from Joseph's example of forgiveness?

**Genuine forgiveness chooses reconciliation rather than recompense** (Genesis 45:4-8). In this beautiful drama of Joseph's revelation of his identity, no

words of reproach spoil Joseph's forgiving conduct. Joseph had the power to settle accounts from twenty-two years before. Instead, the heavenly power of gentle reconciliation flowed from his heart. Cultivating a forgiving spirit involves choosing to return gentleness to the one who tarnished my reputation with a false story.

**Genuine forgiveness lovingly "covereth a transgression."** Forgiveness is shown not only in what we do but also in what we do not do. Joseph evidently had never disclosed his brothers' treachery. Even when he revealed his identity, Joseph prized privacy. Human nature desires to reveal another's offence; divine love conceals it. "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9). Joseph's public quietness toward his brother's offences returned rich redemptive dividends. He gained his brothers!

**Genuine forgiveness flows from a heart of compassion** (Genesis 45:15). Joseph gave his miserable brothers the kiss of brotherly love, encouraged them to come near to him, and wept with them. "And after that his brethren talked with him" (45:15). In circumstances where warm feelings freeze, divine compassion melts the desire to retaliate. Forgiving from the heart can transform men with cold shoulders into close friends.

**Genuine forgiveness seeks to bring a comforting end to past offences** (Genesis 45:10-11). Joseph's forgiveness traveled the second mile by inviting his father and brothers to move near to him in Egypt. What a contrast to the brothers' gleeful good riddance years before! A forgiving spirit takes the initiative to draw near to the one who injured me. Do I make the move to meet after church?

**Genuine forgiveness is enduring** (Genesis 50:15-21). Joseph's brothers worried that, in the wake of their father Israel's death, Joseph's forgiveness might shatter. They came seeking reassurance that their past crime was still forgiven. Joseph "spake kindly unto them." All was well. Such constancy is a jewel in brotherhood relationships!

Joseph's forgiveness foreshadowed Christ's perfect forgiveness. Like Joseph's brothers, every accountable person stands trembling before the One he has "sold" in living for self. What redemptive words He speaks: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more!"

*Brother Daniel.*



## PRAYER POINT

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

**Thank God for the open doors to spread the Gospel at home and in the foreign fields. Pray that each one of us would have such a burden for the lost that we would be ready to go where He sends us.**

**Pray that the Lord would search our hearts and  
“See if there be any wicked way in us  
And lead us in the way everlasting.**

