

## Hell? Not Me! I'm Amish!

By Emanuel Esh

We're in a war. You know there is a war going on for the souls of men. *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*<sup>1</sup> There's a war over the souls of men.

I think of the time when that war raged over my soul. Of course I didn't see it that way at the time, but it was there. I grew up a born in an Amish home. I had parents who were godly, as far as they knew how to be. I loved life. As a young boy I was taught right and wrong, good and evil. I was taught that the day would come when I would join the church and be baptized. Then, if I would be faithful in doing good to the end I would be saved. We read the Bible in our home. I read quite a bit of God's Word. I sought for God in my youth. Nevertheless the day came when I turned 16, and was loosed, in a sense, to go with the youth into all kinds of sin. God in His mercy, though, was watching over me, I know He was.

I'd like to share my personal testimony of how God has worked in my life. I trust that He will make it a blessing for you. I desire that He would get all the glory and the honor. In my youth I did want to do what was right, but the company I was in was not the best, and soon I knew that was not the answer. I knew sin was not the way to go. Of course I thought I was a pretty good fellow. I didn't know of God's standards of holiness, but I measured myself according to the others around me, and I thought I was pretty good--I wasn't quite as wicked as some. I had been baptized when I was 19, and was kind of surprised that there wasn't more to it. I was about sure something should happen with all my sins, but nothing did. I was a member of the church, I was very sincere, I was earnestly trying to do what was right.

When my friends began to get married and I kind of got left alone, I sought for something to spice up my life. Life was kind of dull, you know. I didn't know the Lord. I got involved in a volunteer fire company, which made some excitement every once in awhile. I also got involved in a volunteer ambulance service, close to where I worked. Through that and a series of events, I met my wife. Actually that's where I had first seen her, and began to see her. She was not with our youth group, and at first I had no interest in her, so I thought, but God was working differently there. One Sunday one of my best friends told me about a girl he was trying to see, and she didn't want to see him. And a Sunday or so later this young man came to me and told me that this girl is leaving the Amish church. "Oh," I said. "I know who that is. I think she'll be at our ambulance meeting on Monday night. I'll try and talk her into coming back to the Amish church."

So after we had our ambulance meeting that night, I went to her. I started talking to her about leaving the church. That was the ultimate sin, leaving the church. When you leave the church you get put in the ban, and the ban was a fearful thing. You get cut off. She heard my cry that night, and allowed me to talk to her. I actually took her home that night. She wouldn't get out

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 12:7-11

of my buggy. She just sat there and cried. I was of course trying to persuade her to come back to the Amish church, and she was very mixed up at that time. Some of her family was already saved, and had left the church years before, and had influenced her, and she had heard some of the gospel. I knew how to bring her back to the Amish church, but I didn't know how to bring her to Christ. But the Lord knew all that. She decided to come back to the Amish church, and we ended up getting married about six months later. God did bring us together, it was a real joy to our hearts. God has given us a beautiful marriage, I can say that. I found a little farm for us that fall, that winter. Then the spring of '82 we moved on the farm and began farming. That was my dream, to have a farm for each of my children some day. I was very zealous.

That farmhouse was a doubled house. It was what we called a Doddy house on the other side where the grandpa would live. We had bought the farm there, so we moved in and the other end of the house was empty. Normally we would have liked to have an Amish family move in there so we would agree together in faith, but no one seemed to want to move in. One day I went back up to the store where my wife used to work, there at Kauffman's fruit farm. I said to Dave Kauffman there, "You don't know of someone who's looking for a place to rent do you?" I thought they'd have some Mennonites who would want to rent it. We needed the rent money as we were kind of desperate and needed help paying for this expensive farm. He didn't know of anyone. A couple days later we learned Brother Mose was in there fixing a refrigerator, freezer. Just before Brother Mose walked out the door he turns to this Dave Kauffman and says "Hey, you don't know of a place to rent, do you? We have a family moving in that wants a place to rent." "Why yeah," he said, "I do. It's down there on Red Wall Drive." Brother Mose came in our driveway and wanted to rent the house. Well, we wanted renters, so he looked through it and handed me the check. That was ok. I said "Well, who's coming in?" "Well," he said, "they're Christians, don't worry. They're nice people. You'll like them for neighbors."

We found out their names were Denny and Jackie Kenaston, somewhere from Tennessee. They were moving in on a certain day, and my parents happened to be there that day. My parents were a little fearful, especially when this family pulled in, in the U-haul truck loaded with furniture. We were watching from the kitchen window, and Brother Denny crawls out of the driver's seat, with his big blue bib overalls on, and a long red beard. His wife was dressed in a full, modest dress, and had her head covered. My mom had a fit. She told my dad, "Dad, you go find out what they believe. We don't want them living here with Emanuel's. We don't want them to lead Emanuel's astray." She had very good concern, like a mother should have. Well, Dad, he's a little easy-going. He walks over there and greets this new family, shakes their hands and talks with them. I think he was kind of impressed with them because they even got the rent down \$25. I think Dad had asked them what they believe, and they said, "We believe in being born again. Our names are written in heaven." Well, Dad probably agreed with that. He came back in the house and told us that they think they're saved. They actually believe that they can know they're saved. Our doctrine in our church said you cannot know if you're saved or not. My mom wanted my dad to pay them back the rent money, and ask them to leave. The war was raging. Dad said, "I think they're gonna be good neighbors. Let 'em. We'll try it." We found out soon that they were good neighbors. Best neighbors we had ever had or seen. Of course I was very protective. I would not open my heart. "This man is not going to lead me astray."

We found out they were starting a church. The church people were in and out, and they'd have singings out in the front yard, we could hear them preaching through the bedroom walls, and we were sitting tight. I mentioned something to my dad one time a year or so later, and I said, "You know, our neighbors, they're godly people. They have something we don't have." Dad agreed. "Yeah," he said, "you're right. They do. There's something different about them." I didn't know what that was. We got to know them pretty well, and my wife had been sick, expecting, and if you know much about raising children and Jackie she would come with some pills, or some

medicine and advice. It was such a joy. My wife and Jackie got along really well. They were good friends.

We were, of course, wanting to be neighborly, so we invited them for a dinner one day. So they all came over and sat down to lunch. We just had a real good visit. They sat there at our table, and I remember so well Brother Denny. He shared his testimony, how they he was just a hippie, what God did in their lives, and how he got born again. He looked at me, and he said, "Well, so, Emanuel, when did you get born again?" I could handle this pretty well, I thought, so I just told him, "Well, I was baptized when I was nineteen, and I kind of grew into it since then." He didn't push his point. It seemed like God gave him such grace, because he could have turned me off just like that. That's where we as Christians need to be careful, so we don't turn people off.

I remember later one time they gave us a tract called "Which Resurrection?" There was a picture on the front, a nice picture about a religious man who ended up going to hell. It was an awesome tract. My wife and I read that tract that night, and it scared us. For the first time in my life, I faced eternity. I was afraid. We went to sleep that night, forgot it, and went on with our life. Don't forget, brothers and sisters, when you give tracts to people, pray that God would work in their lives.

We ended up getting into some kind of embarrassing situations with our neighbors. Brother Denny went out and preached in the local Minute Market to the young Amish boys there. He was soon known as that preacher that lives back there at Emanuel's. They put some pressure on us, and said, "Why don't you tell them to move?" "Well," I said, "they're good neighbors. We don't want to tell them to move." So they went and put pressure on my dad. "Why do you have those renters at your place? You know, he's preaching to our young people." Worse yet he went and baptized a couple Amish sisters. That was bad. We tried to convince him he did wrong, but he knew better. After three years they moved away. They left behind a testimony of Christ, and of the kingdom of God, of salvation, of strength, how to live a godly life.

We went on with our life. We had little girls at that time. Farming was going really well. My debts were being paid off. I had a wonderful wife. What more could a man want? I think of the young man who came to Jesus and said, "What good thing must I do to enter the kingdom?" Jesus said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God. But, if you want to live eternally, keep the commandments." The young man said, "I've kept them all. I've kept all the commandments from my youth. What lack I yet? There's something missing yet. I've done all these things, but there's still something missing."<sup>2</sup> That's what I felt like. There was something missing. After they moved away I kind of let those guards down. I was more open to a friendly chat than before. They came back to visit us. We actually went to their place for breakfast one morning, and even had devotions with them, sitting around their living room. I sure hoped they wouldn't get us to kneel. I didn't want to kneel, for some reason. Brother Denny said, "Well, we're going to pray here." So we just prayed in our seats. I was pretty comfortable with that. I had let my guards down.

About a year and half later one of our friends got converted, from a neighboring Amish district. Someone told me that those people are leaving the church. Well, since I had experience in bringing people back to the Amish church (my wife) I thought I could go talk to them. So we went to visit this young family. They were a little bit younger than us, my wife knew his wife well. I tried to tell him he shouldn't leave the Amish church. He said, "We're not leaving the Amish church." But he was all excited about something. He had a note paper, his Bible, and a notebook full of scriptures. He was so excited about the Bible, so excited about Jesus. I went

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 19:16-22

away from that place shaking my head and thinking “I don’t understand what happened to that man.” But it challenged me. I got a small pocket Bible, and put it in my pocket. Every chance I had I began to read that Bible. That was in the fall of ’86. We were seeking God, and we didn’t know it yet. But God again had mercy on us. On New Year’s we went back to that young family again, and asked some more questions, and he shared his testimony with us, how he got saved. Then I told him about this family that lived with us. I said, “They have a church in New Holland.” He wanted to know their names, so I gave him the name. We found out later that after we left that day he went to the phone and called Brother Denny right away and said, “We want to come to your church.” I didn’t want him to go to that church, but that’s what happened.

About that time, God began to work in my life in a deep way. I felt under such conviction. I was such a miserable man. A few weeks later, in March, I was out working the fields, harrowing, preparing for planting alfalfa, and all the sudden there was such conviction. I can still see myself, walking back and forth in those fields, all day long, loaded with sin and guilt. I didn’t know what was wrong. I tried praying. I didn’t know how to pray. I tried crying out to God. I didn’t how to cry out to God. There was a deep agony in my soul. There was a war was raging over my soul. I didn’t see it then like I do now. Finally one evening I broke down to my wife, and I told her, I said, “I’m going to go to our bishop on Saturday night, and confess my sins. Maybe that will take care of this problem I have.” I really didn’t know what was wrong, but I felt like I was such a sinner. She did what she had done before when she got into a difficult place. She went and called Jackie, and told Jackie what I’d said. When Jackie convinced her that that won’t help anything, that that’s not going to take away my sin and guilt, she told me what Jackie said, and somehow I knew it was true. I had seen men in the Amish church under the load of sin and guilt, go to confession, and through six weeks of excommunication, shunning, and shaming, and come back to church to be taken up again as a member of the church with the same load of sin and guilt in their lives. I had seen that time and time again. When my wife said that Jackie said it won’t help anything, I knew in my heart she was right.

That was probably around supper time. I was out working in the field again that evening, till it was dark. I came back in the barn and was putting horses away when I saw this car coming in the lane. Somehow I knew who it would be. Brother Denny showed up there, being friendly, and greeted me. He was very upfront. He said, “Jackie said your wife called, and I just wondered if maybe I could come and share with you some.” I finished up chores and went in the house. He opened up his Bible, brought the Word of God to us, got us on our knees, got us to confess our sins, some of the surface ones, prayed for us, prayed with us, led us in a prayer---nothing happened. So he left, went home again.

It must have been a day or so later this other Amish family, that started going to Charity for church, stopped in. I was at home, and I walked out to their carriage kind of cautiously because I knew that they’d left the church by now. I didn’t even invite them in. They just sat in their buggy and talked a little bit. “We were at those revival meetings,” he said. “I’ve never heard anyone preach like that before. Do you want to come and hear him preach?”

In my heart I desperately wanted to go, but I couldn’t. “I’m Amish. Can’t go.” It was a disappointing feeling.

I think it was the next day at noon or so, that Denny and Jackie came by again. They got my wife and I on our knees again. We confessed some more sins. I mean, these were really big sins now, the stuff that’s hidden down in your heart, the stuff that has never been brought out. The kind of things you don’t even want to talk about. You try to hide them. Those kind of sins began to come out. I remember so well Brother Denny there beside me by the couch. I was praying, confessing my sins. He said “Lord, show Emanuel he’d split hell wide open if he’d die tonight.” And I thought “Hell? Me? No. I’m Amish! Amish people are good people. Amish

people go to heaven.” And I’d just got done confessing some of the vilest sins!

I don’t understand how blind sinners can be. I was blind. My wife’s heart was wide open, she was receiving all those things. They gave us the “Which Resurrection?” tract again when they went out the door. They said “Read in the book of John.” We were searching for the answer. We read that tract again. It brought back those memories. It was so real, it was facing us with our sin, and the reality of the consequences of sin. This man who died, and immediately faced eternity, facing the judgment throne, and being cast out, even though he had done all those good things in church, because he had never been born again. I turned to the Bible, opened up the book of John, and it opened up in John chapter 9. That’s the story of the blind man. God in His mercy revealed that chapter to me. And I saw myself in the blind man. I’m blind! I read the rest of the chapter, and I saw how this blind man’s eyes were opened, and he could see. Then I saw the persecution that came. I saw that that was exactly where I was going to go. Somehow I knew that I was not saved. God ministered that chapter to my heart at that time.

They were having meetings every night that week, and the power of God was falling upon this county, souls were getting saved, and people were getting right with God. Conviction had fallen on many people, and I was one of them. Thank God. They wondered if they could bring the evangelist out Saturday morning. Well, I said “Yeah, I guess.” I was kind of nonchalant. Saturday morning came around, and I was out in the field plowing, just out from the house. They came in the lane, and waited until I got to the end and turned my horses around. I left the horses there, and I came to the house, said hello to them, and went inside. We began to hear again the Word of God laid out, and things like Colossians was laid out; the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God, and how we can be translated from one kingdom into another kingdom. He drew two circles on the board. You have a kingdom over here, and a kingdom over here, and we’re here in the dark kingdom now, and over here is the kingdom of light, and we have to get from this one to the other one. It was a good illustration, but I didn’t know how to get there. I wanted to. You know, when you draw this cross here to span the gap, that’s the way to get there, but I didn’t know how. They tried their best to show us repentance, and faith, and Christ. I so badly wanted that. But I didn’t know how to get it. We got on our knees to pray again. I checked the horses you know, they were getting kind of restless, this took about an hour, two hours. Brother Denny was with the evangelist, and he said, “I’ll go take care of the horses. You pray.” He saw I don’t need to worry about them now. So we got on our knees and started to pray. Brother Denny came running in the door and said, “The horses are running away!” They were. They were right out through the field, making a big circle with the plow in the ground, coming back toward the barn. I ran out there, and managed to jump in behind them. I hauled up the reins, and got them stopped in the midst of my much trembling. Now I was shook up.

What was happening?

A war was raging. A war was raging over my soul. My hands shook so much I could hardly tie the horses. I thought I knew God didn’t want me to pray with these men. These men are of the world. We’re Amish. I don’t want these men to pray with me any more. We got back in the house, and the evangelist was so excited. He said, “The devil was out there with a pitchfork that time.” I thought it was God. He thought it was the devil. I was confused. A war was raging. We got on our knees and prayed, but they lost me. I was not on the hook anymore. I prayed a prayer and said, “I’m saved now.” And zip, out the door they went. Just like that. I can still see them. They went out so fast. But I wanted them out there. I was done, I thought.

It had been a rough day for us, my wife and I. We didn’t know what was right. We didn’t know what was truth anymore. You see, we were being faced with our whole system of religion. Either these people and the Bible are right, or our whole system of religion is wrong. That’s a difficult place to face. But I want to say that if you’re in religion today, and you’re seeking Christ,

you have to lay down your religion before you come to Christ.

“Not me, Lord. I’m Amish. Amish go to heaven.”

We went to the Amish church the next day. I told my wife, “I know they’re going to be preaching out of Romans six and John chapter three today, and I’m gonna listen very closely about the new birth. What is it about the new birth?” Our church was very stirred up at that time, because this other family had just left the Amish church about the new birth. He had been very bold and outspoken, and so the preachers didn’t preach about the new birth. Well, they had to read the Scriptures, but they wouldn’t comment on them. I was sitting at the edge of my seat, trying to gather any kind of information I could get about the new birth. You see, I still trusted my religion. I still trusted my ministry. Finally, one of the last words one of the deacons said before church was over, was this, “New birth is like this,” he said. “When you hear the noise of it, you can’t see where it comes from, you can’t see where it goes, and so is a man that is born of the Spirit of God. You can’t know if you’re saved or not.” I was on the edge of my seat. When he said that, “You can’t know if you’re born again or not.” I relaxed. I thought, *If I cannot know if I’m born again or not, then I surely must be, for I am such a good person.*

A war was raging for my soul.

I went home from church. It was not a surprise for me to see that little car come back in the driveway that afternoon again, about half an hour after we got home. Jackie came in, very friendly, visited for awhile, and we were very friendly. Of course we didn’t show any conviction at that time. Finally she couldn’t hold it in anymore. She said, “Well, I thought I’d stop in and invite you to come to the meetings tonight since you got saved yesterday.” I looked at Jackie and said, “I didn’t get saved yesterday. I lied to those men. You can’t know if you’re saved or not.” She begged for us to come to the meetings that night. I knew if I’d give my little finger, she’d take my whole hand. I also knew that if we’d go to that meeting, and nothing would happen there it wouldn’t matter. No one would get in trouble. I also knew that if we’d go to those meetings and something did happen it wouldn’t matter what people would say anymore. God was working in my life. I said, “Okay, we’ll go with you.” So we did. She went away as happy as could be, I’m sure.

We did our chores, and someone came to pick us up. I forget who it was. We had known quite a few of the church people, because they’d been in and out of Denny’s there for three years. So the church was not new to us. There were of course some new faces there, but most of the people we knew. They were all very glad to see us, I’m sure. The church was praying. You know, I’d like to know some time what you guys really did with us there. I know they cried within their hearts. We heard a real good message that night. Such a powerful message. I’d never heard preaching like that before. I’d never been in a church like that before. I had my guard up. Let me encourage you today. If you have your guard up in your heart, just let it down. Let the Lord Jesus work in your life. If you don’t know for sure if you’re saved today, put your guards down.

They sang a moving song during the invitation. I didn’t understand what was going on and I was not going to move. I didn’t move, either. I was proud. I was Amish. They were so friendly. Brother Denny came to me afterwards, sat down beside me, and he just talked as friendly as could be. I was this miserable wretch. Finally he said, “Wouldn’t you want some more counsel?” I said, “Yeah, I would.” We went downstairs there in the basement of the New Holland church. They put me in this room. I was alone for probably half an hour. They were busy with other things, and I just waited.

After awhile Brother Mose came in, and he began to share with me, and began to show me a few things about my religion, how I was wrong. I asked some questions. There had been some people who had left the Amish church that I could not understand why they would leave.

People who I knew had been sincere. I would ask the preachers, or others, “Why did they leave the church?” No one could tell me. Some would hint and say, “Well, they said they got born again. They think they’re saved.” Well, I didn’t know what that really meant, so I really didn’t care. That was my background. But I had questions. “Why are they excommunicating these people for no sinful reason?” Brother Mose began to teach me on that, and show me they were putting people out of the church when they get born again. God began to open up my eyes. I released my people, my religion, my Amish in my heart. I let it go. I knew.

I began to realize that being Amish would not save you. And when I realized that, I had no foundation. I had nothing to stand on. Well I still didn’t see I was really lost. Brother Denny came in. Brother Wayne came in. We prayed. We sat up and talked, and confessed, and they dug and they searched and they sought God. We prayed some more for salvation. Nothing happened. Finally Brother Wayne said, “The Lord just spoke to me and said you’re involved in witchcraft.” I said, “Witchcraft? Not me.” “Yeah,” he said, “the Lord just showed me you’re involved in witchcraft. You know, water witching, kinesiology, muscle testing. What about the ouija board?” He began to name a whole bunch of things, and I’m like, “Yes, yes, yes, yes!” The Lord began to open up my eyes.

Well, I have a great-grandfather King who was a water witcher, and I remember going to his place when I was a little boy. We asked him to take that pliers in his hands, and walk across the floor, and he did. That pliers would just suddenly fly out of his hands with power and hit the ground. That’s called water witching. We, as little boys, picked up that pliers and we tried to do it. We walked right across the same spot. Nothing would happen. “Yep,” Wayne said, “that’s it! I knew it!” I said, “What else?”

We talked about muscle testing, putting some pills in your arm, and having someone try to push your arm down to see if it’s the right kind of pills for you. You know, muscle testing? Witchcraft? Hmm. Now what about reading the horoscope in the newspaper? You know, they were next to the funny page, where you find your birth date, and you line these numbers up with the words, and you find out what your horoscope says for the day. Witchcraft. What about the “Farmer’s Almanac”? Planting according to the moon. Witchcraft?

And then the Lord showed me that I’d played with the ouija board. Our neighbors had a ouija board, and we played with the game. Didn’t mean a thing. Wayne was excited by now. “I knew you were in witchcraft. The Lord showed me. You need to repent. You need to confess. Get on your knees and repent to God. Confess it all.” I did, and the Lord opened up my eyes. I saw my sinfulness for the first time. I immediately saw a need for a Savior, and I cried out “Save my soul! I’m a sinner. I’m a wretched sinner. Oh Lord, save my soul.” That old devil was cast out. I confessed, I repented, cried out.

I looked at these three men on their knees beside me. There was an overwhelming love flowing out of my heart for these men. The first thing I said was “You guys are my brothers.” They knew I was born in the family. Hallelujah. It wasn’t a big feeling. It was a release. I wasn’t even sure what happened.

It took me days and weeks to finally catch up to what God actually did in my life. The day before, I remember being on my knees, confessing my sins, and Brother Denny led me to that Scripture that says *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*<sup>3</sup>. He said, “You need to forsake these things.” I said, “Well, how do I do that?” He said, “You just give them to God. Everything that’s precious to you, give them to God.” I did that, prayed that prayer, “Lord I give you my wife, children, I give you my farm, my cows, my bank account. I give you

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 14:26

my family, my church. Lord, I give it to you. In Jesus' Name, Amen." There wasn't much to it. When I got saved I knew I'd done it. I knew the farm, my family, my church, the whole thing, belonged to the Lord.

The line was clearly drawn down the middle. All the sudden I was on this side of the fence! It was just so clear. All the sudden I was now on the same level as those other Amish people who had gotten excommunicated. Now I knew I was one of them in spirit. I knew, like the blind man, I would also get excommunicated, put in a ban. Did that matter? Not a bit!

I had the joy of salvation, the joy of deliverance, freedom from bondage, the assurance of salvation. Oh, glory to God! Well, we jumped and shouted some there at church that night. Brother Denny was one of them. Imagine. This was probably midnight, or one-o'clock. He took us home, and I was a new man. I saw that my people were lost. When I saw that I was lost, then I saw that my people were lost because I was one of them. Then I cried out for the Savior, and I was saved! But my people were not. We went to some more meetings, praise God, they went for three weeks. We went to those meetings just about every night. What a joy, what a blessing. Thank you, Lord. Our hearts got so cleaned up. We were so full of the glory of God. Others were getting saved. Other Amish families were getting saved. It was glorious. It was a revival.

Thank you, Lord, for saving me in the midst of that. Thank you Lord for touching me in the midst of that.

Of course persecution began to set in. Not really persecution, just opposition I should say. It wasn't persecution. My parents found out about it. I remember so well the next morning, the day after I got saved, we got to bed late that night, got up late, I was still out milking the cows probably at 7-o'clock. That was an hour late. Pretty soon a buggy comes driving in the lane. I thought, well now, that is very unusual. Who could that be? It was an Amishman I knew well. Lived a mile up the road. By the way, our Doddy inn was empty at that time, and we were looking for renters again. He came and said his sister was moving that day, and they need a place to move to. He said "Would you allow them to move into your house?" Well I knew this couple. I wouldn't even considered then having them move into our house. They were the last Amish couple I would want to have been neighbors. But God did a work in my heart, and I said "Sure! We'd be glad to have them move in." I was really looking forward to witness to them. "Well," he says, "well, okay, we'll have them move in then." And he's ready to walk out of the milk house door. I'm there washing the milkers, and he's ready to go, and I just looked at him, and I said, "I just want to let you know that I believe the same way that Aaron Bylers do. I got saved last night." He just turned around, and he ran away. He was afraid. This awful plague of salvation had fallen upon me. Glory to God!

I had so much fun the next couple days surprising the Amish people. I was still an old Amish person to them. They hadn't marked me off yet. I stopped at a buggy shop, to pick up my buggy wheels. I was right across the road from another Amish family who had gotten saved and was coming to the meetings. I got my wheels and while paying my bill I said, "Well, what do you know about the family in the drive over there?" "Oh," he said, "I don't understand what's going on." He just went off talking, kind of gossip type, things that go around, and said, "I just don't understand what they're doing. I don't know why. Why would they do something like that?" I looked him in the eyes and I said, "I didn't understand it either until last night, and I got born again. Seek, and ye shall find." He was so afraid. I went from his place into the next drive of course, to visit the Amish family that got saved. We had a grand time just sharing together.

It was glorious! Salvation. Full, free deliverance. Power to witness and a desire to just share with everyone. I mean, I would be driving down the road in my horse and buggy, kind of slow compared to a vehicle, and see people walking on the road, going through town there. I'd just intently peer in their faces, wondering if they know the Lord. Of course some people had

heavy faces, loaded with sin and guilt. I knew they didn't know the Lord. Every once in awhile you'd meet someone with a joy, a smile.

I began to analyze all my family. I wonder if my dad ever got saved? What about my mom? I don't think they were ever saved. What about my brothers and sisters? If they did they never told me. What about my uncles, my aunts, all my cousins? Granddad? No one. None of them had ever talked about Christ that I knew of.

Salvation. God saved my soul that day. *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the LORD<sup>4</sup>.* When you get saved, many should hear about it, and trust in the Lord. I have to say my family is still not saved. I long that they would come to Christ. But it was very difficult for my family, it was very difficult for the Amish church. They didn't know about it for two weeks. When we went to church two weeks later, after the last meeting was over, it was counsel meeting, and that's where we were asked to come out. My wife and I had agreed that morning that if the minister would say something against these meetings, that we would disagree with the counsel, and you don't disagree with the counsel. But they did say something about these meetings, and said that anyone who went to those meetings could not go along to communion a few weeks later. So we spoke up and said we don't agree. The church was shocked. They knew that I was a good Amishman in their eyes, in my eyes. And I was. I was one that was in the work, I was doing what was right, I was doing my best, and they knew that. When I made that sudden switch they could not understand.

My dear wife, she gave her heart to the Lord a couple days after I did. We were one. We stood together. We prayed together, worked together. Thank you, Lord, for a precious wife like her. That Monday evening, those buggies started rolling in our lane. One, two, three, four, five, ministers sitting in our living room, with their wives. Granddad was there, he was a deacon. My uncle was there, he was a deacon. They were all sitting in a circle, just visiting. Of course I wasn't going to open up and say anything right away, as this was heavy stuff. But they opened up, and began to talk and ask questions, and we just shared. "Yeah," I said, "I'm born again." My wife and I sat in the corner that night on a little couch and just bawled. Conflict. The war was still raging. Satan had lost one of his servants, and was wanting to get him back again. They left us that night just bawling. We cried, we wept.

The Word of God was so precious. The Bible opened up. Power. God speaking right to our hearts. Many times I'd look at the Bible, I'd read a verse or two, and I'd just think, "Phew, that is so powerful. It ministered to my heart." The Word of God is quick and powerful, it really is. If it wouldn't have been for God's word, we would not have been able to stand. God's word was so clear, and the Spirit of God was working in our lives.

We did face a lot of trials that summer. We had some friends, and they had gotten saved, and we were kind of back and forth with them. Brother Denny in his wisdom asked if he could teach "The Godly Home" in our homes that summer. He did. We met every other Thursday night or so, and he came and he taught "The Godly Home" to six or seven young Amish couples with small children. What a blessing that was. I remember when he preached the first message. After he was done, we fell on our faces and repented. We didn't know better. We didn't know what we were doing. The next time he preached the second message, and after he was done preaching we fell on our faces and repented again. And the third time, and the fourth time, six messages he gave, every time we'd fall on our faces and repent. But God was teaching us how to raise children. We'd learned some about raising children through the bedroom wall. Denny's lived

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 40:2,3

there. We'd hear these children, hear a squabble over there, and afterward we'd hear this slow, calm, whack, whack, whack, whaaaa! Whack, whack, whack, whack, and so on. I said to my wife sometimes that we learned to train children through the bedroom wall. We did, followed example. Godly example. Those children were so godly. We wanted godly children. They put a vision in our hearts.

During that summer, it must have been before he was teaching in our homes there, or late that spring, I came to the place where we were kind of see-sawing back and forth "Well, God's been working in our lives, but Amish..." The pull of our religion, the pull of our system was powerful. It looked so right on the outside. Our people looked so godly, they looked so humble, even though we knew the truth now. But the pull of the system was so powerful that there came a day that spring that I told my wife, I said, "We're gonna take a stand here. We're not leaving the Amish church. We're gonna stay here." We knew that we had to tell the Charity people that if they came we were going to have to tell them to leave because we decided to stay Amish. It was a Monday morning when we decided that. There was turmoil in our hearts, back and forth, and that was a rough week. There was an unrest in my spirit. There was a cloud which had come upon me, I didn't know why. I remember so well Saturday, around noontime, this little white Isuzu pickup comes driving in the lane. Brother Mose sits there, and "Well, how are you doing Brother Emanuel? God bless you!"

"Oh, we're okay. Ah, we decided we're gonna stay Amish, and you guys have to leave."

"You can't do that! That's fornication! That's committing adultery. You've given your life to Christ! You can't do that! You've gotta follow Jesus!" He preached to me. And he preached some more to me. I withered, and I repented. He went back out the driveway, and I knew the cloud had left. My walk with God was clear again. Thank you, Lord. I knew the direction God wanted us to go. Never again would I waver.

God has been good to us. I know that not everyone's conversion is so dramatic. It's my heart's desire that if you're caught in religion, if you've been baptized but you don't have assurance of salvation, seek God. Seek the Lord. He may be found. Let go of the system and embrace Christ. His blood cleanses us from all sin, washes us through and through, makes us clean, makes us pure, makes us holy, by His own righteousness.

*This booklet was transcribed from the personal testimony of Emanuel Esh given on December 19, 1999, at Charity Christian Fellowship. Transcribed and adapted by Elissa Hege, Gospel Tape Transcriptions, 2006.*

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