

On March 26, 2010, John Esh and seven other

members of his immediate family went to be with the Lord they loved. Also privileged to go with them was Joel Gingrich. He had just become engaged to Rachel, John's beautiful and vibrant 20-year-old daughter. The others were John's wife, Sadie, his son, Leroy, and Leroy's wife, Naomi, and a baby. Two other single daughters, Rose and Anna, went with them as well. A friend of the family, Ashlie Kramer, was also killed in this horrific crash.

They were on their way to Iowa to attend a friend's wedding when their plans were interrupted by a semi-truck loaded with car parts that crossed the medium strip and hit their 15-passenger van head-on. The truck driver perished when he hit a wall on the side of the road and his cab caught on fire.

John was a minister in their church just west of Burkesville, Kentucky. His family also formed a gospel singing group called *The Eshes*. They were well known and much loved in their "New Order Amish" and conservative "Beachy Amish" churches. But it seemed that John's prevailing burden was for the people of his birth, the "Old Order Amish." He loved them and talked much of the richness of his heritage. But he also had a deep concern that many of them were lost. He longed to do more to help them to the mercy and grace of his Savior.

The following is part of a letter that John wrote some time ago.

-Dave Esh



"Brethren, my heart's desire
and prayer to God for Israel is ..."

Dear Friends,

Greetings of love in Jesus' name.

I have many regrets. I still love and respect my people (the Amish) even though the system has some flaws and I'm afraid many do not understand the plan of salvation. I encourage those that are still with the Amish to do all they can to help as many of their brothers as possible to true faith in Christ and the cross, with mercy from God and forgiveness of sins. Please, Christian Amish, help your brethren to a strong personal commitment, prayer life, family devotions and reading the Bible in a language they can understand. Prevail in prayer for them; do what you can; share your faith. Win their hearts fully to faith in Christ. Don't try to pull them out of the Amish. God can take care of any necessary changes that need to be made, but work to have them born into the family of God. If I can do anything to help, I want to. My heart burns for the salvation of my own people, especially those that are my flesh and blood.

I appreciate many things about my upbringing and about Amish church life. The close communities, much interaction, discipline in many ways, learning to work, and the strong teaching on humility. The life-style made it needful to be more self-sufficient: large families, making our own clothes, growing our own food, the family table three times a day. Other churches also have these things to a certain extent, more or less, but the Amish are fairly constant with them, more so than most other groups.

It is possible to have all these things, though, and still be proud at heart, without saving faith, and with a heart that is spotted with sin, unwashed in the blood of Christ, without true victory, and not fully aware of the need, not knowing how to find perfect peace and rest for the soul. Being "Amish" will not save, but Jesus Christ will, if we give ourselves fully to Him.

Oh, please, please, there is a way. We still fail many times, but we know where the door is and where to find mercy. Please have your self-will broken, call on God through Jesus Christ for washing, for cleansing, for love, and forgiveness. Seek to lose confidence in your own ability, but find confidence in Christ. Assure your hearts because of Him. It is the only way. We only have a little time left. God wants to break us; will you allow Him? He wants to get rid of our self-life; will you lay it down? God wants to give us peace through Jesus Christ. Will you receive it? He wants our all or none. He wants our heart, our commitment, our love, our obedience. Are you willing to fully yield? Please do. Where you spend eternity will depend on it.

Oh, how can I, needy as I am, continue to help? How can I show the way and be an example? I need the prayers of those I love. Brethren, pray for me, and encourage me. I want to help. May the Lord be with all those that are concerned.

-John Esh