

**YESTERDAY'S TOMORROW**  
**Session Ten**  
**Class Leadership Instruction**

Introduction Notes

A. In 1941, W. G. Gehman preached at the Annual Conference in Bethlehem from Jude 24, "To Him Who is able to keep you from falling.

1. W. G. Gehman was the leader of the Gospel Heralds, the church planting wing of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ.

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God keeps those who are His children through faith in Jesus Christ that they never totally or finally fall away from Him.

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2. What Gehman expresses in this excerpt is quite different than what was believed in an earlier era of our church.

- a. Salvation could be lost or forfeited.
- b. Gehman referred to God's ability to keep us in the way.

B. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints was a major issue in a division in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ in 1947.

1. Throughout the period of the 1920's and 30's, the Pennsylvania Conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ was getting out of step theologically with the other conferences.

2. When a merger with a group which promoted Wesleyan perfectionism and second work sanctification, the Pennsylvania Conference withdrew.

Question Notes

Perseverance of the saints is a difficult topic for some to digest. It creates controversy for some who find it hard to reconcile human effort and divine working.

1. Neither the Articles of Dortrecht nor the Doctrines of the Evangelical Mennonites articulate a doctrine of perseverance. These statements about excommunication show that those who turned away from God would be "separated from God and the kingdom of God denied..." The MBC statement shows that those who sinned after being saved could return and be saved again.

2. The purpose of this question is to find out what members of the class are thinking. This is not a right / wrong question.

3. These verses teach human effort is a part of the Christian life. Some have used

these verses to deny the doctrine of perseverance. The need to endure is part of living the Christian life. Endurance is obeying God in the face of pressures that force us to disobey.

4. These verses teach that God is at work within to keep us. They declare that the power of God is such that we "shall never totally or finally fall away, but shall persevere to the end." They do not deny the need for us to endure or persevere. In other words, the fact that God has promised to keep us does not mean that we do not have to obey.

5. In some senses, this question is the heart of the matter. Some say that the doctrine of perseverance leads to lazy Christians. Why worry about obedience if you are going to be saved anyway? Remember that Jesus linked obedience to love (John 14:15) and not to fear of losing salvation.

6. There are two possible explanations. Either a person was never born again (the second kind of seed in the parable of the seeds) or the person is born again and will be brought back from sinful activity by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit.

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**PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

Article 16, Of Ecclesiastical Excommunication or Separation from the Church.

We also believe and profess a ban, excommunication, or separation and Christian correction in the Church, for amendment and not for destruction, whereby the clean or pure may be separated from the unclean or defiled. Namely, if anyone, after having been enlightened and has attained to the knowledge of the truth and has been received into the fellowship of the saints, sins either voluntarily or presumptuously against God, or unto death, and

Article 17, Excommunication, or Separation from the Church

We believe and confess an excommunication, a separation and Christian punishment in the Church, for amendment and not for hurt, that the pure may be separated from the impure. If any one, after he has become enlightened, has accepted knowledge of truth, and has become united in the society of the holy, falls into such unfruitful works of darkness whereby he is separated from God, and the Kingdom of God is

Article 16, Sin after Justification

Not every sin committed after justification is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Therefore, the grant of repentance is not denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, it may so happen that we may depart from grace given and fall into sin, and we may even then, by the grace of God rise again, and through the workings of the Spirit, and turn to God and receive forgiveness of

Article 18, Perseverance of the Saints

Salvation is the work of God from its commencement to its consummation. Those regenerated by the Word of God through the work of the Holy Spirit become partakers of the divine nature. They are preserved by the power of God so that they shall never totally or finally fall away, but shall persevere unto the end (Articles of Faith, Bible Fellowship Church).

falls into the unfruitful works of darkness, by which he separates himself from God and is debarred from His kingdom; such a person, we believe, when the deed is manifest and the Church has sufficient evidence, ought not to remain in the congregation of the righteous, but shall and must be separated as an offending member and an open sinner, be excommunicated and reprov'd in the presence of all and purged out as leaven... (Articles of Faith, Dortrecht, 1632).

denied him, such person, when his deeds are manifest and made known to the Church, shall not remain in the congregation of the righteous, but shall and must be separated as a bad member and open sinner, must be put out, and in the presence of all must be punished and swept out as a leaven, until he amends (Doctrine of Faith, 1866, Evangelical Mennonites, from What Mean These Stones? p. 30).

our sins (Doctrines and Disciplines, 1936, Mennonite Brethren in Christ).

## QUESTIONS

1. What did the writers of the Dortrecht articles and the Evangelical Mennonites believe about the permanence of salvation? What did the Mennonite Brethren in Christ believe? What does the Bible Fellowship Church believe?

2. How would you explain the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in your own words? What is your opinion of this doctrine?

3. What do the following passages teach about the permanence of the new life?

-Matthew 10:22

-Matthew 24:13

-2 Timothy 2:12

4. What do the following passages teach about God's preserving work in the life of the believer? Do they teach that it is possible to lose or forfeit eternal life?

-John 10:27-28

-Philippians 1:6

-Philippians 2:12-13

-1 Corinthians 1:8

-1 Peter 1:5

5. Does belief in the perseverance of the saints promote carelessness in the Christian life? What is the relationship between the quest for holiness and assurance of salvation?

6. What is your explanation of the person who makes a profession of faith and lives the Christian life for a time but returns to a life of sin?