

YESTERDAY'S TOMORROW
Session Eight
Class Leadership Instructions

Introduction Notes

A. The Evangelical Mennonites were committed in principle to missions at an early time in their history.

1. In June, 1864, when they were not yet five years old, they discussed the task of taking the gospel to the world.

God has called us to take the gospel to the whole world because only by faith in Jesus Christ can sinful humanity be delivered from eternal punishment.

"6. Then there was a discussion about missions. Jesus commands His followers, and not only the Apostles, to go into all the world and to all nations to teach and to preach to them the Gospel. Since every Christian shall love his neighbor as himself, and since the present time is a special time of grace when every concerned Christian shall be inspired to have a part in spreading the Gospel, therefore we are aware, as a small branch of the Christian church, that the time has come to form a Mission Society in our group. Therefore be it

Resolved: That Eusebius Hershey, David Henning and David Gehman be a committee to prepare a constitution for the foundation of a Mission Society. The named committee shall meet one day before the next Conference for discussion and it shall present the written constitution to the Conference for approval. It shall also be our prayer that God will bless His church with many faithful laborers" (Verhandlungen, p. 38).

2. In November, 1864, they approved a constitution for a mission society.

"We, as a small branch of the Christian Church, feel in duty bound to render obedience to the precepts of our Lord and Savior, who offered up His life out of love towards us, in order to redeem us from eternal death; since He has commanded His Apostles, as well as all who love Him, to go into all the world, to preach the Gospel to every creature, (Mark 16:15) and to preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, (Luke 24:47) we, as a small division of the Mennonite Society feel it also our duty to organize a Missionary Society to contribute our mite to the great work of our Lord. May the Lord grant willing hearts and open hands, besides His rich blessing" (Constitution of the Missionary Society, from What Mean These Stones?, p. 41.)

B. The commitment to missions did not become practice until almost twenty five years later.

1. During these years, our church was so busy seeking to plant churches and reach America that going beyond was not on the agenda.
2. In 1890, Eusebius Hershey asked permission to travel to foreign shores.
 - a. Hershey was a zealous and diligent evangelist who traveled through Canada, Western Pennsylvania, and Ohio in his missionary work.
 - b. The minutes of February 6, 1890, record the following:

"Evangelist E. Hershey requested permission from Conference to travel to the heathen land of India this year if God would open the way. Permission was granted to him" (Verhandlungen, p. 192).

- c. The following year, at age 68, Hershey set out for Africa.
 - d. Six months later, in Monrovia, Liberia, Hershey died.
3. His decision to go to Africa was like a spark to fuel the fires of a new passion in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ in Pennsylvania which gave rise to the following discussion in February, 1895.

"The Presiding Elder gave a touching address concerning the increasing interest in the missionary work manifested in our church. At the close of his address he made the question, 'How many of those present are willing to go to the foreign field as missionaries if the Lord calls you, will you rise to your feet?' Whereupon a dozen or more rose to their feet under a deep impression through the Holy Ghost. Many were moved to tears under the operation of the Spirit. Brother William Gehman, our dear ex-Presiding Elder, who has founded the word here in Pennsylvania, and has been at the head of it for more than forty years until within the last few years, rose to his feet, after the others sat down, and said, 'If I were a young man again and would see the great need of the missionary work as I see it now, I would go myself. I have often wondered,' he said, deeply moved, 'Why some of our young men are not called to go as missionaries.' Brother A. Strawn then rose up and made about the same expression" (Verhandlungen, p. 242).

C. Commitment to gospel work beyond the shores of America has been a characteristic of our church ever since Hershey's death.

Question Notes

1,2. The basic views about the sinful condition of human beings and the destiny of the unsaved have changed little. Discussion of this question will familiarize your class with what is in the doctrinal statements.

4. Those who say that hell is symbolic must answer why God chose this symbol. In other words, if hell is symbolic, then the reality must be so terrible that only the symbol of the lake of fire can express it. By the way, I am convinced that hell is literal.

5. Is there another way of salvation? No. But statistics say that evangelicals are becoming weak about this. Questions about the native in the jungle who has never

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heard about Jesus crop up in discussions like this. If people live according to the dictates of their religion, some teach, they will be given a place in heaven. The Bible is clear. Jesus alone is the way for sinful men to be saved.

6. At the very least, you ought to talk about obedience to God's commands. And, if we love others, even the unseen others of the world, then we ought to want to bring the gospel to them.

7. Maybe the answer is obvious to you but there is lots of discussion and feeling about this one. In an era of tight budgets, the cost of the sacrifice for missions rises and so do the questions of mission givers.

8. Encourage your class to think not so much of the "big" things but the significant things like praying, writing to missionaries, learning about what is going on in the world and so on.

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MISSIONS

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(1895, Verhandlungen, p. 242).

"2. The Fall of Man.

We believe and confess, conformably to the contents of the Holy Scriptures, that our first parents, Adam and Eve, did not remain long in that glorious state in which they were created, but that as they were seduced by the cunning and deceit of the serpent and the enmity of the devil, they broke the commandment of God, and became disobedient to their Creator, through which disobedience, sin and through sin death has come into the world ('since we have all sinned'), which consequently has come upon all men, while all have sinned, and thereby have brought upon themselves God's wrath and condemnation." (Doctrine of Faith, Evangelical Mennonites, 1865, from What Mean These Stones?, p. 27)

"Article 8 Man.

... Our first parents did not remain in the glorious and happy state of their original creation; but, through the subtlety and deception of the devil, disobeyed and transgressed the command of God the creator, incurring upon themselves and their posterity the sentence of spiritual and physical death. The guilt and consequences of Adam's sin are imputed to the whole human race so that all men are guilty, inherently corrupt, totally depraved and subjects of the wrath of God." (From the Articles of Faith, The Bible Fellowship Church).

"Article 19 The Evangelistic Mission of the Church.

The Church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to all nations. Each particular church and every believer bear responsibility to this commission. In the Gospel God has clearly revealed the only way of salvation which is sufficient for and applicable to the whole lost race of mankind. Based on His infinite and perfect love and his expressed desire that all men be saved, He bids the Church that with urgency, compassion and persuasion it proclaim the gospel to all people and invite them to believe.

It is the duty of privilege of everyone who hears the gospel to repent and receive its merciful provisions. Those who do are saved, and those who continue in impenitence and unbelief incur aggravated guilt and perish by their own fault." (From the Articles of Faith, The Bible Fellowship Church).

"19. Resurrection of the Dead, and the Final Judgment.

We believe, according to the Scriptures, that through the incomprehensible power of God, on the last day all persons who have fallen asleep will be again awakened, made

"Article 26 The Judgments.

The Scriptures enumerate several judgments which differ as to time, place, subjects and results. All judgment has been committed to the Son by the Father.

Through the death of Christ on the cross, the believer's sins have been

alive, and capable of arising, and that these, together with those that then will remain in life, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, will be changed, and placed before the judgment seat of Christ; and that the good and evil will be separated from one another, and that the good or pious, as blessed, will be accepted by Christ, that they will enter upon eternal life and receive joy such as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard nor yet entered into the heart of man; that on the contrary, the wicked or evil, as accursed, will be cast out and banished into outer darkness, yea, into the eternal torment of hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." (Doctrine of Faith, Evangelical Mennonites, 1865, from What Mean These Stones?, p. 31)

judged and he has passed from death unto life. In no case do the redeemed come again into judgment concerning their eternal destiny. Each saint, however, will be required to give an account before the judgment seat of Christ regarding his works and conduct.

The unregenerate will be judged, condemned and banished to eternal damnation in the lake of fire."

"Article 28 The Eternal State.

There are two final eternal destinies for man, heaven for the righteous and penitent, and hell for the unrighteous and impenitent. At the great white throne judgment, all the enemies of God will be consigned to the place of eternal conscious punishment from which there is no escape. The new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness shall be created as the final state in which the righteous shall dwell forever in the presence of God." (From the Articles of Faith, The Bible Fellowship Church).

Questions

1. What did the Evangelical Mennonites believe about the condition of the unregenerate? Is the view of the Bible Fellowship Church different or alike? Explain.
2. What did the Evangelical Mennonites believe about the destiny of the unsaved? Is the view of the Bible Fellowship Church different or alike? Explain.
3. What do the following passages of Scripture teach about the condition of human beings and their future?

-John 5:24-29

-Romans 5:12-21

-Ephesians 2:1-3

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-Revelation 20:11-5

4. Do you think that what the Bible says about hell is to be taken literally or symbolically? Explain.
5. Do you believe that faith in Jesus and faith alone can save a human being from judgment? Or did God allow some other alternative? Explain.
6. What ought to be our motivation for giving ourselves and our resources to the task of taking the gospel to the whole world?
7. Do you believe the high cost of missions in terms of finances and the toll of human life is worth it? Explain.
8. What are some of the ways anyone can be involved in the work of missions?