Why I left the Mennonite Church

Church Leadership

In my studies I have come to understand that the method of Church leadership as implemented in the Mennonite church is unbiblical and not like the New Testament church at all. I do not believe in the control grid were bishops have more power or authority than local ministers. I do believe this is serious as the Bible teaches that each church is to be autonomous and self-governing. The idea that a bishop could influence or make decisions for a church when the local body feels differently is completely unbiblical. The New Testament church is to be run with elders who then take on different tasks-- “a teaching elder”—then there are to be other elders that aid him in the work of the church. Together these elders fulfill the offices of bishop, pastor, teacher etc. They all are in subjection one to another and to God’s Word. It is in the ignoring of the Biblical model for church that we create many unnecessary problems. Should the Bible or our tradition determine what we can and cannot do? If the reformers had thought like this they never would have broken from Rome. Here is a link with an article I put together on the subject with the appropriate verses. <http://www.manifestedbythelight.com/manifested---a-blog/elders-bishops-and-pastors-one-office-or-three->

Church Standards

On the subject of church standards. People use the argument that all organizations have rules why shouldn’t the church? And to that argument I hold my Bible up and say we do have rules. Jesus Christ is clearly taught to be the head Shepard of the church and He has supplied us with rules. God has given everything we need for life and Godliness in His word. We are not to add to it. The apostle Paul says why should another man bind my conscience? The liberty I have in Christ should not be bound by somebody else’s beliefs. He goes on to say that we do not try to offend the weaker brother with our liberty. The weaker brother is the one who believes something is sin when it is not sin according to the Bible. He says that the weaker brother should never violate his conscience. In other words even if something really isn’t sin (in this case meet offered to idols) the weaker brother should not eat of it if he believes it is wrong. But believing something is wrong for ourselves does not make it wrong for others when the Bible does not say it sin. So Paul says let no man spy your liberty out and put you in bondage to manmade rules. In Colossians 2:16-23 Paul lays out the idea that Man-made rules have a shew of wisdom they seem wise but do nothing to change or keep the flesh from sinning. So, does the power to live a life free of sin lay in rules or the Cross of Jesus Christ? I have discovered in my life the Power to live free of Sin comes from believing in Faith alone! That my righteousness is not my own but Christs Righteousness imputed to me.

I have discovered that In the Mennonite Church there are many substitutes for the truth. This is a good example of such a substitute. It is the substitution of what God has designed the Christian life to be like, exchanged for a man made version of the Christian life. When a church requires things of its members that are not in the Bible under the guise that it is for your good what that church is really doing is putting moral obligations (standards) in the place of the finished work of Christ on the cross and all that that work should mean in a believers life. The word of God is powerful and sharper than a two edged sword yet church leaders do not choose to trust its work in the lives of those who claim to be saved. The word of God when faithfully and accurately preached will change and affect the lives of all who listen and heed. I have observed that you can tell which churches are teaching a true pure gospel and which ones are not by looking at the members lives in those churches. The true converts and false converts are easier to see in a church without standards. The church with standards forces all to look alike and it can be harder to tell who is a false convert. While both churches may have hypocrites because all churches do. The Church teaching a true biblical Gospel will have people that are clearly converted and living free of sin Because God’s word has truly changed their lives.

But when we look at a Mennonite church it is almost impossible to tell who is saved and is not saved. One could say well they all look like they are saved therefore they must be saved. But I would say because of the extra Biblical rules that have forced all to be moral and dress nicely on the outside you cannot tell but that some hearts may be unconverted. This is very dangerous because now a false reality exists within this church these people assume they are safe because they follow manmade rules while the true reality may be that many truly are on their way to hell. It is the Work of the Holy Spirit and of God’s word that leads me in righteousness. As a Christian I truly am not my own but Christs and I will and must strive to live without sin and no Christian needs church standards to do that. If we do then we have not truly appropriated Christ’s work to our heart. A immature Christian may need mentorship and discipleship by his parents and pastor and if a struggle exists in a certain area then he may need to stay away from certain things but this is something that is different for every Christian as he grows in Christ he will become more and more mature and strong. “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Hebrews 5:14 you cannot use the argument that the immature need the church standards it makes no sense to put the strong under bondage. Yes as a Christian I do not want to offend somebody with my freedom that simply means I do not flaunt it in people’s faces it they do not agree with me. And if I am with somebody who does not want to go into a restaurant that serves beer then I would not do that when they are with me. Their simply is no biblical support for making a list of corporate rules to keep the immature in Christ safe, how are they to grow spiritually if they remain sheltered? Read Colossians 2:16-23.

I have seen standards substituted for the power of the cross in people’s lives. I have seen forced accountability that does no good because the heart is still unconverted. I have seen people condemn those to hell who do not interpret scripture the way their church does all the while being unsaved themselves. From the mouth of many a Mennonite preacher I have heard many an unbiblical sermon denying the sufficiency of the Cross of Jesus Christ, not always in out right words but through a very fuzzy interpretation of the gospel message that should be clearly outlined. In teaching extra Biblical Standards as a necessity in one’s life one puts Jesus finished work under and in subjection to the Standards of a church. And this is important to understand because God’s word dictates who is and is not a Christian. A churches standards are not to be the guide because the Bible clearly outlines what one must do to be saved. Christ died for the sinner and when he repents he deserves to be a part of any true church without doing anything more than the Holy spirit has showed or asked of him in his Christian walk up to this time. So for the church to deny membership to a Christian because they are not wearing a dress or because the guy smokes is to deny The power of the Cross, it is to discount the saving blood of Jesus Christ in that person’s life. He is a part of the Bride of Christ and yet you will not give him or her the right hand of fellowship? Our unity is not in looking alike or even understanding all scripture the same but it is in having a biblical view of the Cross! The gospel unifies all believers. If we hold our selves aloof from others that have evidence of being Christ’s then we must ask ourselves are we truly Christ’s? The intentions are good on most people’s part but it is time for people to wake up and realize the arguments used for Church standards do not hold up to scripture.

I believe with all my heart that most Mennonite church standards are comparable to what the Pharisees had done in Jesus’ day with their religion. Control is the ultimate end of Standards an unbiblical control that you cannot support with scripture. One may point to the supposed success they think they see in churches like the Pilgrim and Eastern Conferences because of their standards, but I can tell you of many a sad story of many an unsaved person and many a confused youth. And all because those standards created a false reality that deceived people about their condition before God! The bottom line is a church can preach faith alone all it wants but if it continues to require things for membership in the local body that are not in the Bible then it tells the world and its people it doesn’t really believe what it teaches. We say we believe in the sufficiency and authority of Scripture. Yet we feel the need to add to what the Bible says. We are not happy that a person may be a member and be within Biblical lines--we must make them go beyond. We hold people above and beyond Scripture just like the Pharisees and I have no doubt Jesus would say the same thing to us that He did to them.

Mathew 23:15

"Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him towfold more the child of hell than yourselves".

Mathew 15:9 says

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Matthew 23:13 says

"But woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in".

Salvation-Justification

This is really the crux of the whole matter. The misunderstanding of salvation and justification is the reason that church standards are necessary. If one does not have the power of the Cross in their life then standards are the only way to live free of sin. The problem is that this then becomes a problem. “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work”. So the answer for victory and independence from sin is the Cross, not standards, and yet we lock the cross away from people by teaching a double standard. We teach grace for salvation but practice works for church membership. How confusing. That verse says that if you try to be righteous through your works you have annulled Grace and if You have grace then the works don't count. I don't know about you but since I can't do enough of my own good works for heaven I would rather rely on grace. As that verse points out if you are in a church system with standards you start to assume inevitably and if not you, then your children will assume it is part of their salvation-- they’re “maintaining the faith”, they say. O how proud! Yes a Christian has standards from the Bible and a Christian should practice works. But that is different than requiring things for church membership that are not in the Bible. That is the wrong kind of works. If a person has a personal conviction that is not in the Bible, like the straight cut coat, the cape dress, the beard etc., he can practice it, but should never push it on others in the form of church standards. It has come to my attention that our misunderstanding of justification and the supposed need for all these rules are linked. To say that rules are necessary to keep us from sinning and so we don’t lose our salvation is a huge problem and points to a much bigger problem. And that problem is a misunderstanding of justification and sanctification. Our teaching on this subject comes from the Roman Catholic Church. I have discovered many similarities between Rome and Mennonites that should not be there. And they are alarming.

What alarms me so much about this topic is that before my very eyes I see the truth about salvation being warped and changed! We must remember every great change starts taking place in people’s minds. The idea for this change is often planted by what one reads. How we word what we write for others to read and what we think and say is very important. It has been brought to my attention that the Rod and Staff Sunday school book for the youth class makes this statement, “Beware of the teaching that Jesus Christ took our punishment for us.” While I understand Christ did not spend a eternity in hell like we deserve he did indeed take our punishment and sin upon himself in other ways! There was no explanation just that statement. It caused great confusion in the Sunday school class that a friend of mine was teaching. He came to me and we studied the truth of God’s Word. He then went back to his class and straightened it out and told them their Sunday school book was wrong.

I couple that story with that fact that our CLE book has also said similar things. Last year it denied that God really turned His face from Jesus on the Cross. It said that the words “why hast thou forsaken me” were not literal. A year before that the same book also said to beware of the teaching that Jesus “bore our sin”. They had explanations but they were all wrong. So what is happening? This is why I do not trust our commentary in our Sunday school book at all. I will teach the entire lesson without even reading the commentary. There should be no room for this kind of teaching and there should be no toleration for the Gospel message being warped. To “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints” is refereeing to such a time as this. Not defending the straight coat, cape dress, etc. We spend time defending Mennonite traditions that are not in the Bible while our Sunday school books are calling into question the very tenants of the Gospel.

The story of the Eastern preacher who is told to preach more about standards and less about the cross is also quite concerning. I firmly believe there are thousands of Mennonites not saved. There are enemies of the cross and those enemies sometimes are bishops, they are ministers, they are Sunday school book writers. We could say well, they are confused… There are many things in which a Christian can be confused or even deceived about and still be saved. But the gospel message is not one of them. With sanctification we come to fully understand what we have experienced.

I can find this confusion and deception in almost every Sunday school paper we get every Sunday. It is very rampant. There is so much more I can say on this and the article below will sum it up nicely. It is very sad that we consider that more liberal churches as “losing it” while it is the more conservative churches that are drifting away from faith alone. They are losing their identity in Christ.

An article on Biblical Justification <http://www.manifestedbythelight.com/manifested---a-blog/justification>

Eternal Security

If you grew up Mennonite you most likely believed that your salvation could be lost any time you sinned. From that view some have matured as I had to the idea that Christ doesn’t cut us off every time we sin because it is His righteousness imputed to us, but rather if we embark on a life of continual sin we will lose our salvation. I have since moved past that view to understanding Scripture in its entirety that a Christian is sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. I would like to show you why the Bible says a Christian will never embark on the Life of continual sin. One day I realized that if I believe one thing to be true then something else must also by logic and necessity be true.

Let me explain, if I believe that I can lose my salvation by having too much unconfessed sin in my life if I indeed believe that God’s grace covers me up to a point and then does not cover any more then what else must I accept as true? If I believe that to be true then of necessity I also believe that by living a faithful life I am maintaining my salvation. Think about it if one departs from what one knows to be correct and becomes unsaved in the process then what was keeping you saved? Your life style is the answer! How can we keep something like salvation when we could not earn it in the first place? If it was up to me to keep something so precious and something that we couldn’t create would we not all surely loose it? We must understand that our bent is away from God not toward God. There must be some supernatural power that keeps us saved in Christ! “Not of works lest any man should boast”. You see many Bible verses like that one point to the fact that yes it can’t be earned but neither can it be maintained by works. The Bible tells us that works prove our faith. That faith produces works. Not the other way around. Charles Spurgeon said it this way “we must believe that the author of our faith is also the preserver of it.” It all comes down to the Gospel being man centered or God centered. If I can lose my salvation then I am saying that the way I live maintains or keeps my salvation. This obviously cannot be correct. Scripture never contradicts scripture!

Allow me to show you scripture. As Mennonites our view is so twisted on this and our glasses so tainted it is hard to see the truth of the Gospel shine clearly through. One thing we must understand is the good news of eternal life is based on God’s justice and faithfulness in keeping His promises (1 John 1:9). Eternal life means just what it sounds like that it is Eternal! And those who possess it cannot die. Is that what scripture says? I believe so. It is eternal because the very life of Jesus is imparted to Christians and Jesus can never die again. (Romans6:9-10) He is able to save those who come through him and save them eternally forever because he defeated death. When we as a repentant sinner have faith in God’s promises and believe Jesus has done all that is necessary for salvation, we have assurance. God promises that believers will not come into judgment because Jesus bore our sins and judgment on that cross. Catholics believe and teach “If anyone says that he will for certain with an absolute and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance even to the end…let him be anathema” canon 16 Trent. If you and I were only saved till our next serious sin Christ’s work of redemption would only be temporal, but God says that it is eternal (Hebrews 5:9). Whenever man is involved in attaining and or persevering or maintain his salvation there can never be assurance. However if you and I believe the objective truth of the gospel, we will be more certain of living eternally in heaven than of living one more day on earth.

AS I mentioned I believe the very nature of the phrase eternal life means that it is eternal. And that it cannot be terminated lost or revoked. Can one die spiritually after receiving eternal life? Consider these verses.

John 5:24

John 5:24King James Version (KJV)

**24**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Romans 11:29King James Version (KJV)

**29**For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Or you could say irrevocable. In other words a gift is a gift one does not take a gift back because the gift is undeserved in the first place and does not depend on one’s performance.

1 John 5:11-12King James Version (KJV)

**11**And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

**12**He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Romans 8:1King James Version (KJV)

**8**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

To walk after the spirit is to be saved to walk after the flesh is to be unsaved in this context. This verse points us to the fact that the believer has Christ’s righteousness imputed to him and the righteousness is why there is no condemnation. The lack of condemnation is not because of our faithfulness but Christs faithfulness. A true Christian is walking after the spirit the very nature of being saved is to walk after the spirit.

One aspect I like is that Jesus is now interceding for us. It is because of this intercession that we have security.

1 John 2:1King James Version (KJV)

**2**My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Hebrews 7:25King James Version (KJV)

**25**Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The fact that we are saved to the uttermost or forever is because he forever intercedes for us. Jesus prayed for peters faith that night that Peter denied our Lord. He said Satan wants to sift you like wheat. Yet Peter was not conquered of Satan. Was it Peter’s strength that kept him? No it was Christ intersession even though peter denied Christs three times He did not lose His salvation. The power of Jesus Christ Kept Him safely despite His failings.

God does not count the sins of Christians against them or take away our salvation. All sins past present future are forgiven. I challenge anybody to give me an example of somebody losing their salvation in the Bible?

I can point to David Moses Abraham Peter. As examples of men who either lived in sin for a while or sinned grievously yet not for one moment did they ever lose their salvation? They were saved and as such were punished and brought back to the fold. Just like the Shepard who leaves the 99 sheep to get the one sheep who was straying he does not let them become eternally lost. Because once again our righteousness is not our own but from God.

Romans 4:8King James Version (KJV)

**8**Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Hebrews 12:6-8King James Version (KJV)

**6**For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

**7**If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

**8**But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

We see rather that a Christian who commits sin is punished as a child of God because we are His sons. And His sons will remain.

These next verses and their concepts are so powerful.

We need to understand the concept that the gift of eternal life is secured not on my faithfulness but on the faithfulness and promises of Christ Alone! This is a very important concept to understand because at the heart of this issue is a wrong understanding about salvation and justification. It is a carry-over Mennonites brought with them from the Catholic Church.

John 10:28-30King James Version (KJV)

**28**And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

**29**My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

**30**I and my Father are one.

There is no asterisk here with a statement “unless one chooses to pluck yourself out of the father’s hand.” What part of they shall never perish do we not understand? O to take God’s word at its word. I would like the reader to understand why the Bible does not support the fact that a Christian can or would ever pluck himself out of the Father’s hand. Notice the reason we can’t be plucked out is because the Father is greater than all. Yes also greater than us. We need to understand that since the father is greater than us it means also that the Father is greater than the desire to pluck ourselves out or to go astray he has given us a new heart!

Romans 8:30King James Version (KJV)

**30**Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Notice the chain here those who are saved are glorified in heaven. Once again no asterisk saying except for those saved ones who fell away.

The Bible even says that our good works are ordained that we should walk in them. Our life as a Christian is one of supernatural power and influence.

Jude 24King James Version (KJV)

**24**Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

This benediction so often used to end a church service yet so often not understood or believed. This goes well with the verses about not being tempted above what we are able. Christ in his intersession makes sure nothing comes our way that would take our salvation from us. Christians sin yes but fall eternally?

1 Peter 1:3-5King James Version (KJV)

**3**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

**4**To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

**5**Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

And I love these verses they say that we are begotten unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These verses say our inheritance is incorruptible that it fadeth not away! It is reserved in heaven for us!

That we are kept by what? Our self-maintenance of our salvation? No! But by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time!

O how powerful those verses are… we are kept as was Peter by the power of God till that last day till his return! I am secure in His power not my efforts!

This was a real eye opener for me when I saw that the Mennonite system denies the power of the Cross. These verses say that we are kept by the power of God through faith. I’ve heard many messages stating that the purpose for church standards is to keep us on the safe side of losing our salvation. That the standards are necessary to help maintain biblical doctrine. Brothers and Sisters if this is true then you are not saved! Take these verses at their words! O praise the Lord my inheritance is incorruptible, yes even by my sin! It fadeth not away and we are kept through faith unto salvation! Praise the Lord!

John 6:35-40

**35**And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

**36**But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not.

**37**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

**38**For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

**39**And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

**40**And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

What we see in these verses

1. No one who comes shall be cast out!
2. Nobody comes unless the father gives us! Very similar to the verse about no one comes expect the father draw Him.
3. Jesus came to do his father will
4. This is the fathers will that all that are given (or believe) will not be lost but will be raised up at the last day! (Glorified)
5. Verse 39 and 40 repeat the same thing twice! Driving it home! Notice the Promise “I will raise him up at the last day”.

This is very similar to Romans 8:30 that I mentioned earlier. “Those He justified He also Glorified” the promised end result of being justified is glorification.

We have a promise that if we have been saved, transformed and regenerated He (Christ) will raise us up at the last day!

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ: Philippians 1:6

Here we see that Paul was confident that the Work Christ begun in the lives of the Christians at Philippi would be performed till Christ returned. Once again no asterisk unless you choose to take yourselves out of the fathers hands. You will notice that warnings in scripture are about non-believers rejecting the gospel. And the warnings to Christians are about deception but never is it indicated that one’s salvation would be lost, but rather we would be chastened and restored to fellowship with Christ and His church. Excommunication is for the purpose of saving the persons soul (notice excommunication is always to be done only to a non-believer a false convert) never is there any indication given that those people were saved in the first place. Also the Word work in Philippians 1:6 is the same word work used in Geneses he worked six days and rested the seventh. The same power that created the universe is the power at work in us to sanctify us and keep us and glorify us... What power!

Ephesians 4:30 says.

“And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

In this verse we see that as Christians we are to be sensitive to the Holy spirits leading. And it says we are sealed onto the day of redemption.

To grieve the Holy Spirit is not to lose ones salvation! It follows up by saying we are sealed unto Christ’s return.

The idea of a Believer being sealed is in the Bible again and again. “We are not our own” “We are bought with a price” etc. the idea is that Christians have Jesus interceding for them are kept by GOD’S POWER and not their own. This makes our life as a believer a supernatural event.

Christ has promised to deliver us to the Father in Glory one day and he will insure that we arrive there.

John 10 says that true sheep will not follow the voice of a false teacher. Why is that? Because these sheep were called by name they were put in the fold and the Shepard Jesus Christ Guards the door of the fold.

The thieves (false teachers) climb up the wall to kill steal and destroy. But who can they kill or steal? Since this very passage says true sheep will not follow the false teacher. False teachers who teach damnable heresy can only deceive those who are not saved. This is where the idea of wheat and tares comes in. Jesus disciples asked him once why don’t we just take the tares out now? And Jesus answered and said at the last day the wheat and tares will be separated at but let them be together for now. So in the fold claiming to be part of the fold are also false converts and false teachers these are those who are deceive and are deceived and ultimately will leave or “fall away”. Some would say look they lost their salvation no that is not the case John says this about those false converts and false teachers.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. 1 John 2:19

The broad road and narrow road in Mathew is not talking about non-believers and Christians but rather Christians and false converts. People who claim to be Christians but have never experienced salvation. These are the deceived the Judas’s of this world. The Bible says a true Christian’s life will have sin but it will be characterized by a hatred of that sin and a constant striving for victory. If you see a person who does not strive for victory and it appears that they may not have the Holy Spirit working in their lives that is because they most likely are a false convert. And in our Mennonite Churches it is quite possible to be a false convert and not be aware of your condition. It is the extra biblical rules that cause many people to have a false sense of security they do not see their sinful nature and rely on Christ alone they believe they are safe because their church puts so much emphasis on being united in traditions and fails to teach the true gospel! So when the rules are gone they go into sin because they were not saved in the first place. I heard about a family who was catholic and then attended nationwide or eastern churches for a while then went back to being catholic. There is no way those people were saved ever! If they were truly saved they never would have returned to the false religion of Catholicism! The fact that they supposedly “got saved” while attending a Mennonite church explains what happened, as they were attending churches were the true gospel was hidden from their view by the rules and focus on extra biblical things. Instead of getting the truth they got more deception in the Mennonite church. Thus resulting in false conversions. This is why I believe Jesus would say too many Mennonites today exactly what he had to say to the Scribes and Pharisees of his day.

The doctrine of eternal security does not teach that you can live how you want because you cannot lose your salvation. It does say that a truly saved person will endure to the end and persevere. “He that endures to the end shall be saved” The Bible tells us ye shall know them by their fruit. So those who you see enduring will be saved. In other words endurance is a sign you are saved. Those who do not endure the scriptures say were never saved. To not endure is not to sin we all sin but it means to fall away apostatize and in so doing you prove that you never were saved. Jesus did say depart from me ye who work iniquity I NEVER KNEW YOU! Not I knew you one time then you were lost. But I never knew you. Those who ask the question “why would you care to do what is right if you cannot lose your salvation?” do not truly understand the gospel message. The Bible says we are “slaves unto righteousness” “We are not our own” and “we love Him because He first loved us”. Christ transforms our Heart and mind gives us new desires and while we still struggle with the flesh we desire to do right because we have been regenerated. The desire to do right does not come from within ourselves but from God! We must understand this! And this is why a Christian desires to live for God! And the fact that Jesus has secured us eternally and saved us from a huge debt we could never pay should in fact drive us to want to live for him out of so much gratitude!

Many verses are ripped out of context to prove a Christian can lose their salvation but once again if the Bible clearly teaches that a Christian will persevere then we have created a conflict in scripture that we cannot ignore.

Hebrews 6:4-6 are verses used to say a Christian can lose their salvation.

Hebrews 10:26-29 are also used the same way.

Let’s look at Hebrews 6 first.

**4**For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

**5**And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

**6**If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Now if you take these verses to be talking about a Christian losing his salvation then you must also say if that happens that that person can never be saved again.

Rather the context is one of people who live their whole life knowing the truth they go to church they know the truth yet they refuse to depend on Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.

A person may be enlightened you can taste and partake of some of the blessing of the Holy Ghost at work in the lives of people around you.

How many Mennonites do you know who are “enlightened” (have no excuse to be ignorant) they taste of the good work of God they may even have a life that is affected by the truth. And yet to fall away to not choose Christ despite their knowledge of Him. To taste of the heavenly gift is not to fully digest or partake. Mennonites have created a false reality to the point that many believe they are saved but you cannot be saved if you are self-righteous. To crucify the Son of God afresh is not to be a Christian and choose to sin and thus lose your salvation. But it is to know the truth to know who Jesus is and to know what is required and yet refuse to trust him alone to insist on your way of making you righteous rather than Gods way. This is self-righteousness to the max. This was the Pharisee problem. And In the book of Hebrews Paul is talking to a mixed crowd. The point of Hebrews is to point the Jews to a better way to convince them that they can trust Jesus who is a better high priest to convince them that you can trust grace which is better than the law! To convince them that Jesus sacrifice is so much better than that of the blood of bulls and goats. So Paul warns over and over that to reject this truth to know the truth to experience the truth but not be converted by the truth is to fall away from the grace of God. To Reject the Gospel is to crucify the Son of God afresh!

**26**For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

**27**But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

**28**He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Hebrews 10:26-28

These verses are twisted just like Hebrews 6. It is said that to sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth is to be saved and lose your salvation.

On the contrary to know the truth and sin willfully is to reject the truth. If we reject the truth of the Gospel there is no other sacrifice that can save us.

Paul says that for those who reject the truth they have no promise of security but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation,

Once again who does Gods word say will face Gods wrath? Those he saved or the unsaved? “There is now there for no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus…”!

At the end of Chapter ten of Hebrews Paul says this and puts the chapter in perspective and indeed the previous chapters in this entire book.

**39**But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Once again as a Jew are they going to believe Jesus died for their sins or choose to continue in their traditions? Paul says we are not of those who draw back unto perdition (destruction). Draw back from what? Belief in Jesus Christ being a better and the only way of course! To draw back is to choose to reject to not believe the truth. We know this because those people who draw back are contrasted with those who believe to the saving of the soul. So a Jew and we today have two options mainly to believe Jesus is who he says he is and respond to the Gospel call to lay down our self-righteous ways and repent or to go proudly on in our own power trying to show to others that we really can maintain our salvation our own way!

Verse 38 also mentions if any man draw back. Once again draw back from what? Draw back from believing the Gospel! “The Just shall live by faith” these verses contrast the just with those who draw back... So the just live by faith and the unjust or unjustified you could even say will draw back choosing instead to reject the truth.

This is the context of Hebrews these verses cannot be used to talk about a believer losing their salvation.

Another Popular passage that is used to prove a Christian can lose his/her salvation is 2 Peter 2:1-22

Certain verses are yanked out of their context to make a point.

Example. 20-22

**20**For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

**21**For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

**22**But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

But if we read this entire passage from beginning to end we see the context is false teachers and false teaching. These verses actually apply very well to the Word of Faith crowd today the crowd that binds Satan and casts out Demons. These people the passage says in verse 12 are “natural brute beasts” These false teachers and heretics are not saved nor were they ever saved.

Once again the knowledge of the savior Jesus Christ in verse 20 does not mean a saving knowledge these false teachers are those in John 10 who climb over the wall to steal kill and destroy they are in the church they claim to be Christians so they Have a knowledge they know the truth if they would truly believe they would not be teaching this false teaching. The Holy commandment in verse 21 is the commandment to repent. This they refused to do knowing the truth they refuse it! They escaped the pollutions of the world for a while by hanging out with Gods people. Any of us can do this, if we hang out with Christians we can escape the pollutions of the World without ever being saved.

They were shown the truth by God’s people and yet they return to their evil ways without repentance. There is no indication these people were ever saved. To have the sanctifying effect on your life from hanging out with Godly people will not save you. Verse 14 says they “having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin.” One would cease from sin if they were saved. These people could not cease long term they tried for a while on their own power and for a while escaped the pollutions of this world but returned to their evil ways without repentance. Their end is worse than the first. Chances are when these false teachers come into the church they are told the truth ultimately they reject it and leave again.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. 1 John 2:19

There are a few more passages and a few parables one could go over that are used to say a person can lose their salvation. All of those passages are as clearly taken out of context to prove a point as the ones I just listed.

Continuationism

I have seen quite a bit of this in messages from all sort of Mennonite preachers. This is simply the belief that the apostolic gifts (casting out demons is the most popular among Mennonites) are carried through and still in existence today. It comes from the Pentecostal movement, which Mennonites are sympathetic to because they look much like us. But their doctrine is in error. The danger in this teaching is that along with this belief comes the idea that apostles are still in place. The Roman Catholic Church for example believes its bishops are apostles. Could this be why the Mennonite church has bishops that can make rules that over-rule a congregations desires? The apostles could write Scriptures… do our bishops basically write Scriptures by adding to God’s Word when they make requirements for church membership that are not in God’s Word? I think of the example of a certain conference’s bishop meeting in PA where they all gather together to discuss church matters and one bishop remarks “this would be far easier if we had one man at the top over all of us yet”. That reminds me of another false religious system, doesn’t it you?

Word of Faith Charismatic theology.

This is shown in many ways. From a preacher stating that God promises blessings when we give financially, to a preacher claiming that a Christian can be possessed by a demon. You may here that there is different fillings of the Holy Spirit. When have you heard somebody say God told me? My friend He "God" only speaks through His word the Bible. To claim that a Christian can be possessed by a demon is to deny the sufficiency of the Cross. To pray a hedge of protection around Christians is totally unbiblical and to pray that God would bind the power of Satan in a church service is also unbiblical. These all stem from Charismatic theology and have their roots in pagan rituals. As Christians we are never told to be scared of Satan or His angles we are free from their rule and possession because “What fellowship has light with darkness” praise God for what he has done on the Cross to set us free from Satan’s power.

Conclusion

There is so much more that could have been said in this article. And the longer I am away from the Mennonite church the more stuff I see so I am sure there will be follow up articles on this subject. A few disclaimers here at the end. I recognize that within the Mennonite church "as in any church" their does exist people who are sincere and saved, sincere and lost, and just plain lost. I know this that on the judgment day we must be found with Christ righteousness imputed to our account and not our own righteousness or we will be lost. This issue of extra biblical rules for many people has lead them to trust more on their outward garb than on Christ blood and in that there can be no salvation. So I beg you to listen and ponder what I have had to say. Like I have said a church can teach faith alone but unless they eliminate the extra biblical rules they will continue to spread the lie of faith +tradition or works = salvation. It is inevitable you cannot get around it. For myself I must start by understanding salvation properly and biblically and then work out from their and explore other doctrines. But the gospel message is the most important and if you’re church has it wrong then nothing else you believe or do matters period!

In Christ Lyndon Bechtel