



## **September 2018 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders**

Dear Beloved of God –

Immediately following the June 14-16, 2018 Synod Convention, the Synod of Alberta and the Territories was pleased to host a Global Consultation which included Companion Synod partners: The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), the South Carolina ELCA Synod, the SE Minnesota ELCA Synod, ELCA Global Mission staff and the Synod of Alberta and the Territories.

Bishop Atahualpa Hernandez from IELCO had requested the Consultation in order to further our conversation and deepen our expression of communion following the November 2016 International Consultation held in Peru.

As we gathered, the consultation participants often referred to the Emmaus story of the disciples walking together and Jesus coming among them. The global mission's accompaniment model is one of walking together in solidarity, side by side, practicing interdependence and mutuality, in service to God's mission. The values of the accompaniment model are interconnected, and include mutuality, inclusivity, sustainability, vulnerability and empowerment. The core purpose of these relationships, this accompaniment, is God's mission.

The devotions one morning focused on Revelation 7:9-12, "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands" (vs. 9).

"Here," shared the devotion leader, "here in this text from Revelation we see God's dream of one global congregation. Gathered are the Colombians, those from the United States and Alberta. One global congregation speaking a multitude of languages. One

global congregation standing before the throne and before the Lamb. Here we see God's vision. Here we see God's dream of one global congregation."

I experienced this one global congregation when together with Tricia (Ariza) Hoepfner from Ascension, Edmonton we facilitated our Synod Delegation's journey to Colombia July 26-August 7. Our journey, primarily to the rural congregations and ministries of IELCO outside of Bogota, was life-transforming as together we learned of the vast and important ministries: seniors, displaced, marginalized, children through visits to three of the four IELCO schools, single mothers, deaf children and youth, after school meals and homework assistance, various congregational ministries...and most importantly, the significance of relationships...meeting with the leadership of the Lutheran World Federation's World Services office, meeting most of the pastors of IELCO, worship, generous hospitality...one global congregation.

Personally, I was refreshed through the journey and the relationship within the delegation, and the conversations with many friends previously met in Colombia...dear dear friends. And refreshed in the values of family and relationships, faith and hospitality.

Global relationships are complex, and they require time and attention to sustain, but how life-giving as together we live into God's one global congregation dream.

In Christ Jesus –

Shalom,

+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

## Defining Spiritual Perfection

By Linzy Bruno

I find it utterly fascinating that the same doctrinal confusion of biblical days is still ongoing today, but I believe it all goes back to the human condition. Earthly living is vastly dependent upon the health and vitality of the body. Because the earth is a physical entity, all things physical become an integral part of basic functioning and technical progression, thus, people naturally rely on their bodies for strength, their minds for guidance and maybe or maybe not their hearts for measuring the moral weight of incoming stimuli. But, while those of us on the earth are busy doing worldly work, enjoying worldly pleasures and following inherent carnal thoughts and feelings, the Spirit of God is busy gently prompting us to follow a superior governing system, which although opposes the world's system, is completely doable for believers who are willing to root their worlds in an entirely foreign, yet vastly superb new system.

God; knowing everything there is to know, knew believers would face this challenge, hence, He used the Apostle Paul and others to illustrate this godly principle to help believers comprehend the vital doctrine which teaches us to rely on HIM: His Precepts, His Statutes and, His Laws, and NOT the ways of this world, the secular community, celebrity example, ect.....But this means learning a whole new way to relate to and function successfully in this unforgiving, demanding physical world. There are a plethora of Scripture that capture the essence of Christ' Doctrine: freedom, salvation and supernatural gifts; promised by God, (\*\*\*\*however, these privileges are contingent on spiritual commitment.) The Apostle Paul made it his mission to help his people understand the difference between relying on the self, which leads to legalism and convoluted doctrine AND the freedom in Christ, which breaks the bondage of rules and regulations (works of the flesh) for the New Testament believer. The writer of Hebrews followed a similar writing style, as he too was committed to bringing forth revelation to all those confused over Sound Doctrine, (which was especially challenging for Hebrew Christians.) Hebrews 6:1-3 illustrates this Truth by urging the people to "go unto perfection" and consequently lays out the distinguishing features of the Gospel of Christ.

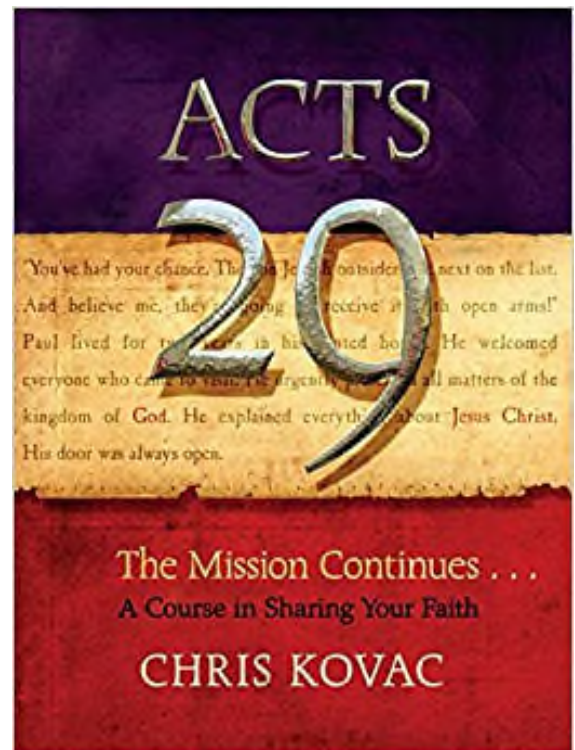
"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3And this will we do, if God permit." (KJV)

The writer would not suggest going "unto perfection" if he were teaching his Church about worldliness. His intention was to teach that, although physical perfection is unattainable, unimportant and spiritually meaningless, spiritual perfection is God's Desire for His people, it's not entirely attainable, as no one can ever reach perfection, but God treats the overcomer (one with spiritual hunger) as one who is spiritually perfect:

"But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1Samuel 16:7, NIV)

That means God cares much more about motive than error and even behavior, which helps us see that He looks upon those believers as perfect, because their spirit; their heart, is perfectly motivated by pureness of intention. God metaphorically refers to the human spirit as the "heart" and the heart or spirit, is where our motives are inspired.

One of the simplest formulas in which to comprehend God's Way over man's in this instance, is to first realize that God looks at everything with a spiritual eye. As much as He is The Expert in Everything, He only looks at the spiritual component, not because He is unaware of the physical, but because His Ways are SO above the physical.



The Acts 29 Small Group discussion series begins on September 26 at 1:30 PM at St. John's.

That being said, when God commands us to work for His Kingdom, He's talking about the spiritual work and instructions for our individual holy lifestyles, not ordinary work. Simply meditating on this Truth will protect believers from falling into reasoning and blindly following worldly ways. When this skill is mastered, believers can call themselves people of a biblical world view. (This differentiation is key to understanding certain books, like James.)

So, when we conduct our lives God's Way, the Holy Spirit teaches us God's Law, either by leading us to a certain Scripture or a Sermon; something He decides to use to gently cause awareness of His prompting. Then, the Truth remains within us and we can always reflect, relearn, meditate or recall it whenever we desire/need (and prayer will retrieve it if it doesn't come readily.)

I know of one more helpful way of recalling what it means to go unto perfection. What I like to do when I feel myself drift into mental tortures of any kind, (which can come from any entity that opposes God and that includes Satan & His minions and even our own souls, or the souls of others) is to recall the basic dynamic of the parent/child relationship, with emphasis on the Father/child relationship. We don't have to follow the law by feeling the weight of the world on our shoulders, but if we love God, we will obey Him. When we are moved to action by the spirit, we do God's Work. Christ is King, therefore, everything we do in Him, we do in love, joy, charity, and a sincere desire to please our father. Jesus said: "If you love Me, keep My Commands." (John 14:15, NIV)

So, lets say you're a child around 8 or 10; still very young, but old enough to be aware of others' feelings and have empathy and you are faced with this scenario:

It's right after dinner, your mom has already gone to your school for your parent/teacher conference, so you and your dad are going solo. Now, after using the bathroom, you walk back into the kitchen and see your father sweating away over an entire days worth of dishes. You know from the events of the day that he isn't feeling well and is very tired AND it's early and you don't even have much homework. You know you don't have to do the dishes, your dad didn't ask you to, but you love your father so much, your only desire is to help him in that moment, in fact, your heart is full, so you offer to take over and the look of relief and joy on his face is all the thanks you need. This is an illustration of going beyond and doing more than the bare minimum which is required and is actually an example of doing a work for God.

This illustration is intended to shine a light on 2 key points:

1. God doesn't want us doing anything for Him because we feel this annoying obligation we want to satisfy. He wants us to do things for Him out of love. (!!!)

Just like we, who are parents want our kids to good and helpful things for us; increasingly so, as they mature, God desires likewise: He wants His children to grow in the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

2. God wants us to become inspired by His Spirit, not by trying to earn or pay our way into Heaven, SO HE has decided a long time ago to write His Laws on our hearts:

"" For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:" (Hebrews 8:10, KJV)

This spiritual language means we don't have to check any rule book, we'll just know what to do and we will be filled with the desire and the ability to do it. And this is an example of how God wants us to apply His Word to our lives. As James taught in His Epistle. (Note the spiritual component James denotes to the type of work in which



he speaks): “ So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.”(James 2:17, NLT)

Once we start to think like God thinks about physical work as opposed to spiritual work, several other concepts also come together in harmony with God’s Way of thinking for our grossly inferior minds. Suddenly, the relentless comparison of God’s Old Covenant VS New Covenant relations with man seems unnecessary. The Truth is crystal clear now, our Precious Lord and Savior has freed us from the law, that includes all aspects of the sacrificial system: animal blood and other sacrifices had to be performed by following God’s long, tedious instructions, tithing, observing the Sabbath and all ceremonial law has been abolished, as these things are all useless in the New Covenant; being solely of the physical. HOWEVER, just because Jesus has freed us from having to do these things, like our parents removing things like curfews as their kids mature, that doesn’t mean God wants His Laws to be ignored, that He doesn’t honor sacrifice and that He’s not THRILLED over tithing and all acts of charity, it just means we don’t HAVE to do those things to get into Heaven, just like we may not have to do the dishes or shovel the snow for our parents to love us, that doesn’t mean they are not THRILLED when their children go above and beyond, and in an act of love, do such things.....”and this we will do if God permits.”

And this, my friends, is how to sum up the substance of spiritual perfection.

~ September 2018 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 10:30 Trinity Communion Service	3 Labour Day	4	5 7:00-7:30 BKY Church Service	6	7	8
9 9:15 Eucharist Service - St. John's 11:15 Communion Service Hope	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 10:30 Trinity Song Service	17	18 11:00-1:00 Lutheran Cluster Meeting	19 1:30 Hope Worship Committee	20	21 International Day of Peace	22
23 9:15 Morning Prayer - St. John's 11:15 Communion Service - Hope 1:00 Hope Council Meeting	24	25 10:30-11:30 Galahad Pastoral Care	26 1:30 Acts 29 - First Class (St. John's)	27	28	29
30 No Church Services this day	Notes:					

~ October 2018 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b> World Vegetarian Day	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> 10:30 Trinity Communion Service	<b>8</b> Thanksgiving	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 7:00-7:30 BKV Church Service	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> 9:15 Eucharist Service - St. John's 11:15 Communion Service Hope	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 11:00-1:00 Lutheran Cluster Meeting	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> 10:30 Trinity Song Service 12:00 Trinity Worship Committee at Randi's 12:00-3:00 Trinity Worship Committee meets at Randi's	<b>22</b> National Nut Day	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> United Nations Day	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 9:15 Morning Prayer - St. John's 11:15 Communion Service - Hope	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> Halloween	Notes:		