

August 16, 2017

Dear Members and Friends:

I have always had fun working on projects of all sorts. When a project is clearly conceived, with a valuable and obtainable goal to accomplish, the challenge of working on the project is an inherent joy. Knowing that the time and effort invested into a directed activity will lead to achieving something worthwhile makes the hard work enjoyable. Whether the project is to edge the lawn, build a desk, bake a loaf of bread, write a letter, or any other kind of worthy endeavor, the work produces an end result that is generally satisfying. Upon reflection, King Solomon felt the same way: "So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage..." (Ecclesiastes 3:22).

In the profession of project management, the definition of a project involves a small amount of very simple qualities. Projects all have a distinct beginning, an ending, and are designed to accomplish a unique goal. Building a dog house, designing a search engine for the web, and cleaning the bathrooms all fit the definition of a project. Something that also fits the definition of a project is Christian conversion. Becoming converted begins in an unconverted state of being, develops through the activity of growing towards perfect righteousness, and is completed by achieving the goal of living eternally in the Family of God. If there was ever a worthy project to participate in, the Christian conversion is it!

If we think about our conversion as a project, there is a specific question that we can ask ourselves, which offers illumination on our progress. It is a question that has the power to sharpen our focus on the end goal that we all seek. The question to ask ourselves is this: "What am I trying to accomplish right now that is improving my conversion?" Our answer should be able to describe how we are building up our righteous behavior in a meaningful and genuine way. If our answer does not describe goals that involve overcoming sin and drawing closer to God, then we become aware of our need to analyze our lives and pick something to work on. However we respond to this question, whether with a specific citation of active work, or an admission of negligence, our answer draws focus on the work we must do. Since the project of Christian conversion isn't over until perfection is achieved—when victory over death is accomplished—we must always be abounding in the Work of God (compare 1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

Fortunately, God understands that the goal of becoming more and more perfect is a difficult undertaking, and absolutely impossible without His help (compare Luke 18:27). For this reason, God the Father sent His Son, as a Sacrifice for all humanity, for the sole purpose of our success (compare John 3:16). And as a result, those who take on the project of becoming converted as a Christian, and who become baptized, are provided with the help of the Holy Spirit of God. When God, through His Holy Spirit, lives and actively works in the life of man, then there is help to overcome sin, and successfully accomplish the Work of God. However, if the Holy Spirit is never obtained, the project of Christian conversion can never be completed, and the result is dire failure. The difference that the Holy Spirit makes is literally between life and death.

Even though such a great gift is available, making us capable of achieving the most righteous of our goals, we have to actively use it to build our spiritual understanding, discernment, and faith. Yes, the Holy Spirit has to be taken advantage of if we want it to have the effect in our lives that it is designed for. It is not enough to merely become baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, while never again putting

our effort behind overcoming sin. In order to succeed in abounding in the Work of God, our gift must be used.

To add to the question about what we are doing to complete our conversion, we must also ask ourselves how we are using the Holy Spirit. Are we actively using the Spiritual knowledge and understanding provided by the Holy Spirit in our lives? Are we drawing upon the strength and power of God that He provides to help us overcome sin? Quite simply, what are we doing with the gift we have? And most importantly, can we do more with it? Knowing the unfathomable potential of God's Holy Spirit to lead us through the most difficult endeavors that we pursue, we can undoubtedly do more. Through the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have been given the ultimate tool to help us succeed in our Christian conversion.

As great as this tool is, it will be useless if we choose to ignore it, and exclusively rely on our own abilities. In Paul's letters to Timothy, he encouraged him to not neglect the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 4:14) and to stir it up so that it would become effective in the holy work he was doing (2 Timothy 1:6). To neglect the gift that we have in our lives and to avoid the work of completing our Christian conversion places us in the path of danger (compare Hebrews 10:26-31). However, if we put the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, to guard our hearts and minds from complacency, and to guide us in accomplishing our work of overcoming sin, the promise of success awaits.

Obtaining the gift of the Holy Spirit in this age is a very special privilege that not many have. If you are fortunate enough to be called by God and have chosen to answer that call, becoming baptized, and receiving the Holy Spirit, you have a very unique opportunity. We are urged to take advantage of it! To do anything less is a shame. In the project of Christian conversion, be sure to tighten the focus of your work and be empowered with the Holy Spirit to complete it.

With Christian love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Rank". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Eric Rank