

January 18, 2024

Dear Brethren,

The *Church of the Eternal God* and its international affiliates have a commission to preach the Gospel to the world as a witness and to feed the flock (compare Mark 16:15; John 21:16; Acts 20:25-28). This commission underpins the decisions we make about how to use the resources that God has blessed us with. We know that God holds us accountable to use the financial resources that He provides through tithes and offerings and the talents of our team of coworkers. We take this accountability to fulfill the commission very seriously.

During our annual conferences and monthly meetings, we discuss these matters, always praying for guidance from God in our endeavors. In the summer of 2022, we made the decision to dedicate some of our resources towards running advertising campaigns to promote some of our booklets. Our focus is to become more known through those advertisements in order to become better equipped to preach the Gospel to a broader audience. This allows us to provide our booklets to interested readers as one way of fulfilling our commission to preach the Good News to the world as a witness and to feed the flock. To any outsider with a worldly perspective, this strategy makes no sense. We spend money on advertising to give away booklets for free, not asking for any kind of monetary return. To the world, this looks like we are throwing our money away. But we believe that God sees this much differently, ordering us to freely give what we have received ourselves. We have a responsibility to share the Good News of the Kingdom of God, and spending our resources in this way is an investment that will pay eternal dividends.

Since we began our modest ad campaign, we have sent over 3,000 copies of the *"The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People"* booklet to those requesting it, requiring us to reprint this booklet 3 times. We also had to reprint our German booklet on *"The Ten Commandments"* (*"Die Zehn Gebote"*) twice, which we are advertising in the German-speaking areas. Depending on your perspective, this may seem impressively large, or laughably diminutive. Larger churches at present and in the past have garnered much greater response. Forty years ago, *"The Plain Truth"* published by the Worldwide Church of God reached millions of monthly subscribers, for example. Yet, when we consider the number of booklet requests our Church received prior to our recent ad campaigns, this is a vast improvement. While the focus of our ad campaigns is on sending physical booklets, all of our booklets—almost sixty in the English language—are freely available digitally on our websites in just about every country in the entire world. It should be plain to see that we take the optimistic viewpoint, knowing that we are not to despise the day of small things (compare Zechariah 4:10).

Of course, it would be encouraging to see more individuals being called out of the world, reading the booklets that we send, and following up with deeper questions on their path to conversion. However, we know that our job is not to convert people—it is God the Father who does the calling (compare John 6:44). We maintain that our job is to proclaim a warning message to the world as a WITNESS, including through our literature and video and audio messages, and to provide material to use for the spiritual growth of those whom God calls. Therefore, the measure of our success in this age is how efficiently we use our modest resources to warn the world of impending disaster and to edify you, our brethren, and to share the Gospel to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. As Solomon encourages us, "Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). We freely publish our booklets, a wide array of other written material, and videos knowing that it is of primary importance to share the Word of God, and not to be overly concerned with how it will produce a return.

So far, I have been writing about our ad campaigns, for which it would be good to get more and deeper responses. But it is also natural to hope for more *from* the Church, as members. The fact is, we are a dispersed group scattered to the four winds! This makes it impractical in many cases to meet in person, unless traveling to assemble for the Feast of Tabernacles or other Holy Days. In addition, the majority of our ministry and co-workers have day jobs, limiting the capacity of work time available to spend on The Work of the Church. At the same time, God has allowed us financially from the very beginning to hire ministers and employees, without whom we could simply not do the Work which we are doing. Even so, expounding upon all the constraints we face would diminish the point I'm trying to make by sounding like a set of excuses.

The point is this—as a Church and as brethren, we are not big and powerful. But rather, we have a little strength (compare Revelation 3:8). Having *a little strength* is different than being weak and powerless. Having *a little strength* means that our limitations prevent us from getting too comfortable and complacent. We have enough strength—maybe just enough—to hold fast to the Truth, to withstand the devil, and endure to the end. The benefit of having just *a little strength* is that we must rely on the limitless *strength of God* to empower us through our struggles, because we don't have strength enough ourselves. We may hope for more, but when we consider what we have, we can see how powerfully God supports us, even if it doesn't always come to us in physical ways. Fortunately, we have a sound financial foundation, and we most certainly have not spent money which we do not have, by borrowing money or going into debt, nor will we ever do so.

As the end of this age approaches, discouragement and disappointment will compete voraciously to tear our hearts away from God. But we cannot submit to those attacks. We must continue to use the resources and limited strength that we have as a Church and as individuals, to keep holding on.

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10).

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Rank". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Eric Rank