

November 2024

Greetings Brethren:

Worshiping and honoring God at the Feast of Tabernacles was a tremendous blessing. In Spirit, we were in the presence of the Creator of the Universe. Can we picture how amazing that is? Out of the billions of people on Earth, only a handful at this time have the blessing to commune with God. Is it real to us, or just spoken words? The joy, happiness, and peace we felt truly represent the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ and provide a glimpse into His Eternal Kingdom. God knows exactly what we need, and this Holy time, separated from the stresses in our lives, provides us with extra encouragement and vision to continue our spiritual conversion.

Now that we have returned home, we are again faced with the constant battle against Satan, self, and society. This trio of adversaries is a formidable, relentless foe, and our battle against it will rage until either the return of Jesus Christ or until we die. This is why the Apostle Paul stated that salvation will be to those who never cease fighting:

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Matthew 24:13).

Desiring to be part of the Kingdom is not enough. Good intentions are not enough, either. We will face many difficulties in life and, through it all, God's will is for us to respond in a particular way. We must not simply grin and bear it. We also must not grumble or complain. We must not resent it. We must endure, or resist, with a positive attitude and not allow these obstacles to cause us to lose focus on the work that God has given us. We must also remember vital aspects of that work which we might inadvertently fail to fulfill by our actions. Praying to God is one method that helps us remember all these essential aspects of our conversion. Once again, good intentions are not enough.

### **Thy Will Be Done in Earth**

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, *Thy will be done in earth*, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread (Matthew 6:9–11) [Emphasis mine throughout].

We are to pray for the arrival of that glorious Kingdom. We do not pray to help God make it a reality; we pray to unite our minds by focusing on Him and His Plan of Salvation. We also pray for God's will to be done on Earth. Yes, His will includes bringing His Kingdom as part of the Plan of Salvation. But His will also includes the called demonstrating particular actions and thoughts in their lives. In addition to this, we must be sure we retain these actions and thoughts when dramatic events on Earth begin to unfold. The reason is that many can become shaken and disturbed when life suddenly changes, and the current peace, tranquility, and comfort are reduced or removed.

### **God's Will Is for a Change in Mind**

We were born with the potential to be added to the God Family. Since we were born with minds that think differently from God and that like things that God hates, we must change our minds to become like God's. God wants us to have—and want to have—a mind that resembles His. This is the only way for unity to exist in the God Family. For this to happen, we must begin the hard work of changing our minds.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, *will of God* (Romans 12:1–2).

When we resist our carnal desires and thoughts, which run contrary to godly principles, we become a living sacrifice. We put down, or kill, the carnal mind. But, a sacrifice is not important to God unless it is a proper sacrifice and acceptable to Him. We demonstrate acceptable sacrifices when we give the benefit of the doubt, do not assume improper motives, do not resent others' successes or blessings because we do not have the same, but instead exude joy and happiness often. Our sacrifice is acceptable because it is rooted in fruits of the Holy Spirit, such as goodness, kindness, and humbleness of mind.

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).

It is not that sacrifices and burnt offerings were of no value, but that God was looking for a change in heart. Israel was incapable of that because they did not have access to the Holy Spirit. But we do, and are capable. There are a million ways for us to change our hearts today. But we will only change them truly by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. *Thankfulness* is one particular aspect of the Holy Spirit that will shape our lives in a way that will allow us better to reflect godly love.

## God's Will Is for Us to Be Joyful and Thankful

We know that we have a loving Father who wants us to have love, peace, joy, and an abundant life. We can realize these blessings when we are obedient to Him. But obeying Him does not mean we will get everything we want when we want it. That means there will be times when we are denied things—even godly things—for our spiritual benefit and character development. When that happens, how are we to respond? In fact, how do we respond to life daily and in all situations? What should our minds be like if we are fulfilling God's will in our lives?

Always be joyful. Always keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16–19, *Living Bible*).

We are to pray continually if we are to stay connected to God. Jesus Christ left us a powerful example of constant prayer as a way He stayed connected to the Father. We must do the same. We are also expected to be joyful. *It is God's will that we be joyful*. So, are we? If we are not in a frequent state of joyfulness, then we are not fulfilling God's will. Have you thought about it that way? Have you thought you were contrary to God's will if you do not have joy? Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, so we cannot simply will ourselves to be full of joy. We must ask God for it, and He will give it to us.

Joyfulness is a barometer of our conversion. If we do not exhibit joy often, we have a glaring indicator of a spiritual deficit. We then know how much more our minds need to change. Joy also represents the Kingdom of God, which we pray for, too.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy [Spirit] (Romans 14:17).

Regardless of what happens in life, and the times of sorrow and pain that we experience, we are to be joyful and thankful overall. That is not easy to do. Yet, we are to be thankful to God for everything that He has done for us. We need to be thankful for the blessings we have: for the opportunity to know Him, for allowing abrasives in our lives that cause us to develop character, and for allowing us to see our selfishness.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations (Psalm 100).

Thankfulness is a powerful mindset when we can adhere to it. When we are thankful, we can be joyful. When we are thankful, we can maintain a proper perspective in life and reduce our focus on the self. Our natural tendency is to think of what we do not have or are missing. We tend to want things our way and become upset when that does not happen. We tend to have adult temper tantrums, and we all do it! Because of our carnal minds and Satan's influence, the negative aspects of life tend to outweigh the positive.

When we begin to change our minds through the influence of the Holy Spirit, we will become more thankful and increasingly focused on the positive. The more positively we think, the more joy we will have, and the more we will fulfill God's will. But remember, this does not automatically happen just because we have a down payment of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not do the work of controlling our minds for us. God requires us to control our minds and to think. We need to think about our thoughts and reactions when they occur, quickly deciding if they represent God's mind or the carnal mind, and then choose how to respond. If we are not good at this, we should quickly say a prayer before responding. It only takes a few seconds. Ask God for the understanding and wisdom needed when we respond so that more often we may exhibit the characteristics of God.

Put on [using active effort on your part] therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; *and be ye thankful* (Colossians 3:12–15).

### **God's Will Overrides Our Desires**

We can change our minds and exhibit more of the Holy Spirit's fruits in our lives, thereby fulfilling God's will in our lives. The more we do this, the more joy and thankfulness we will have, and the stronger we will believe our conversion to be. However, because we still have a powerful carnal mind, we may not wholly accept His will, but prefer our will in certain circumstances. We know God wants us to have love, peace, joy, and an abundant life. We can achieve more of these things when we live in a protected environment of peace and security. But we may still have difficulty fully accepting God's will because of our carnal mind's influence.

Let us assume we accept the overall Plan of Salvation and God's command to develop character through exposure to trials and obstacles. We have begun to change our minds by

reducing carnal reactions and increasing the attributes of the Holy Spirit. We agree with God's plan and His will in our lives. We can pray for His Kingdom to come. But, we can also wish for His will to be different. To some degree, we all will think this way because that is how our minds work. Only Jesus Christ was in total harmony with the Father's will because He had the full measure of the Holy Spirit.

An example of this may be interest in the results of the upcoming presidential election in the United States. There is much anxiety and worry over this election around the world. Many claim that the election has two apparent outcomes. One keeps the United States of America a free nation by the election of a former president who will provide four more years of restoring American greatness. The other is the election of the current vice president who will push the nation down a fast track to a socialist, repressive regime. God's people do not need to have anxiety or worry, because we understand that God will appoint whom He wills to rule over the United States.

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men (Daniel 4:17).

We know this and have read this verse many times before. If we search our hearts, what truly is our desire now that we see the potential for dramatic, negative changes in the world taking place quickly? Since we are carnal, there may be an element of the first choice for which we desire and hope: the potential for peace, safety, and economic prosperity. And why not? Would that not be nice? Of course, if it happened. But, do we potentially think of this first because that is what we want, and then second we think about God's will? Probably.

This means we accept God's will, but we sure hope it mirrors our desires for physical blessings, or at least potentially more blessings for a short period of time before they are removed. What is wrong with desiring a little more physical satisfaction before moving on to spiritual fulfillment? Carnally speaking, nothing. Jesus Christ taught us this lesson:

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house (Luke 9:57–61).

## **God's Will on Our Terms**

We pray for the Kingdom to come and for God's will to be done. But, do we secretly want these things on our terms? If so, the principle in Luke 9 may apply to us. The individuals described in these verses were accepting of Christ's request; they just wanted a personal desire first. So, when we hope for a certain presidential candidate to "win" because we are hoping for the fulfillment of personal desires first, are we any different? No.

This may simply indicate that we are not ready for God's will to be fulfilled, or as ready as we thought we were. That is understandable. If so, it means we have an opportunity to change our thinking. Identifying thoughts or feelings of not being ready is important because, if God's plan unfolds before we are ready, we may lose some of the joy and thankfulness we should have.

If a former president is elected, will we feel a sense of relief? A short burst of joy and thankfulness, thinking more time of prosperity and peace may take place? Most likely, if we assume that a repeat of prior "successes" will occur. Let us assume this candidate does win the election. Several things can still take place that eliminate the anticipated future good times. First, another assassination attempt could take place and be successful. Who, then, by all appearances, can withstand the evil forces at work? Second, the newly-elected president may not be sworn in on Inauguration Day, creating chaos. Third, once in office, a major crisis event could take place that spins the United States into upheaval. What if the only strong and swift action taken to retain peace or avoid economic disaster furthers the globalists' cause of control?

What we all need to understand is that we may agree with God's Plan of Salvation, but we may not be ready for it to unfold. And if it unfolds before we are ready, or at least as ready as we can possibly be, we may negatively react to events out of fear or anxiety. The danger is that these are the times that may cause us to sin. If we can identify apprehension or anxiety about the future, we should be thankful that God is providing an opportunity for us to see areas for spiritual growth.

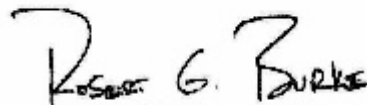
## **God's Perfect Will**

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely (Revelation 21:1–6).

God's will is for us to change our minds, exude joy and thankfulness, and endure whatever takes place in the future so that we may partake of His glorious Kingdom. Ready or not, it is coming according to His timing and will. He has lovingly given us time to prepare and be ready. Not one of us knows what will take place in the weeks or months ahead. But we do know God is faithful and true, and wants us to join Him for Eternity.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert G. Burke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'R'.

Robert G. Burke

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'J'.

Jon W. Brisby