

March 2025

Greetings Brethren:

It is a blessing to write to you, God's precious children—those to whom, at this time, His Truth has been revealed and who have received the priceless understanding of the need for personal conversion to qualify for Eternal Life. Once called by God, we must demonstrate our desire to suppress our carnal natures and replace them with the attributes of the Holy Spirit. We must begin the process of becoming more like God in the ways we think and behave. This is hard and often painful work filled with successes and failures. The key is never to cease striving for perfection.

Jesus Christ is our example of perfection. While there are countless ways to emulate His character, one way often overlooked and misunderstood is prayer. We know that prayer is important and something that we should do, so let us refresh our minds on God's requirement to pray frequently. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

That command is direct and clear to understand. We are to pray often. Not only that, but it is also a sin not to pray. Prayer is personal and direct communication with God Almighty. Prayer is intended to help us achieve our goal in life, which is to be born into the God Family. Without meaningful, frequent, and effective prayer, we may not develop the relationship with God that He wants us to have. If we do not properly develop our relationship with God, and remain disconnected from Him, we may face challenges in qualifying to be in God's Kingdom. The use of prayer has that much significance in our salvation process.

Even if we know all of this, how many of us still have lingering questions about prayer, such as: "What do we pray about, why do we pray, and what is God looking for in response to our prayers?" Our first requirement is to pray to God. This is our lifeline and connection to Him, keeping us in synch with His will.

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth (Luke 11:1-2).

We are to pray to the Father, give Him reverence, and seek to understand His will in our lives. That alone accomplishes a lot. But prayer does not stop there. Our next requirement is to pray for others, which can be the source of many of our questions.

Confess your faults one to another, *and pray one for another*, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16) [Emphasis mine throughout].

The Apostle James was inspired to write that we are to pray for others, and that proper, heartfelt prayer has significant benefits. What is the purpose? We know we cannot pressure God to do something He does not want to do or is not going to do anyway. We cannot collectively pray and, by mass appeal, bring something to His attention and then force His hand into acting. God works perfectly with each of His children independently from you. He does not need you to bring anything to His attention. The purpose of prayer is to bring us each closer to God. So why pray for others?

God wants the future members of His Family to demonstrate unity and teamwork now. He wants us to reduce thinking about ourselves and increase concern for the needs of others because this emulates His nature and character. Praying for others fulfills His Will in our lives when He sees our genuine interest in others, as opposed to primarily for the self. When we pray, what percentage of our time is devoted to ourselves and our problems or desires versus time to others' needs? As a basic guideline, we should pray for others no less than the amount of time focused on ourselves. Can each of us say we do that, and how does God view us if we do not?

### **The Sin of Not Praying for Others**

Before we proceed, we should review what sin is. Sin is a violation of God's law, and our goal is to remove sin from our lives.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).

When we think of the law, we often think of the Ten Commandments, which would be accurate. Remember, the Ten Commandments are the codified version of God's great spiritual Law of Love. The Commandments can be summarized as love to God and love to man. We violate this law if we form idols, profane the Sabbath, covet, bear false witness, murder—by hating, disliking, or being emotionally neutral to someone—or in any other way

defy God's instructions to us. We transgress this Law of Love, and commit *sin*, if we are not expressing love to God or the brethren. Prayer is one way we show God that we love Him and the brethren. Therefore, since God commands us to pray for each other, if we disobey Him, we sin! That is a simple fact. *Yes, not earnestly praying for others is a sin because we defy God's command!* It also reflects a degree of our spiritual immaturity and selfishness.

Are you shocked to read that? Did you ever think you were sinning if you did not earnestly and with heartfelt emotion pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you understand how this demonstrates that you may be more spiritually immature than you thought? How can this be if we agree with the plan of Salvation, observe the Sabbath, and work on personal conversion? The Bible is replete with God's commands on how to show love and outgoing concern for others. When we do not follow God's specific instructions on how to emulate His character and way of thinking, we are missing a vital part of conversion. The outward expression of love *is* the conversion of our minds. It is changing our minds from Satan's dominance to God's dominance. This change in mind is what God is not only looking for, but requires, if we are to qualify for Eternal Life. God does not want us only *to begin* showing love in the Kingdom—He requires that we show it now!

Why do we pray for one another? A primary reason we pray for others is the spiritual benefit that it provides. It is a significant way to demonstrate our concern and love for others, indicating to God that we are aligning our hearts and minds with His. Prayer should also strengthen our faith and deepen our connection with God. Overall, praying for others should help us become better Christians. Below are only a few of the many reasons why we should pray for one another and the benefits it brings to us.

### **Praying for Others Demonstrates Our Love for the Brethren**

God is very clear that He requires us to love the brethren. It is not a request or a "nice-to-do" only if we have the time or interest. "These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John 15:17).

We have read this verse many times before, so it is nothing new. However, we must ensure that we are not defining love in a human way or with human rationalization—like being neutral toward someone or feeling justified in God's eyes simply because we do not outwardly express "hatred" toward them. These are rationalizations of a Babylonian mindset. We must demonstrate love according to God's commands and example. This also means we cannot solely love those brothers and sisters with whom we are naturally compatible. Any

gentile can do that. We must extend our love beyond our natural comfort zone to those with whom we feel less connected.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ [Love] (Galatians 6:2).

Did you catch that? We fulfill the Law of Love *when* we bear each other's burdens! To bear another's burden, we must know what the burden is. To discover a burden, we must communicate with our brothers and sisters. That does not mean prying and asking about every dark secret or being a busybody. But, it does mean we must interact with the brethren. Agreeing with the Faith Once Delivered, but distancing ourselves from the brethren contradicts God's will.

Why does praying for others show love? The answer is that biblical love is an outgoing, sacrificial concern for others. Our lives and days are limited by time. We rarely have enough time to accomplish all we want. And that is the heart of the matter: discerning between our wants and needs. Many of the things we do are wanted, not needed. Are we willing to sacrifice some of the limited time we typically devote to ourselves in order to make time for others?

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

We can lay down our lives by death. We can also lay down our lives and show love by sacrificing some of our time for others. We can easily forgo watching a meaningless television program, scrolling through social media, or whatever else, and spend that time in prayer. What do we pray about? Others' successes, joys, failures, weaknesses, and burdens. If we do not have time for this, or think that praying often about these things is not a productive use of our time, then we are not thinking like God and are not following the admonition of the Apostle James. In fact, it is a hallmark of selfishness and a dominant carnal mind. It illustrates a lack of biblical love for the brethren. Take a step back. Why are we even alive, and what is our purpose in life? Is it to accomplish all the "stuff" we want to do, or is it to develop God's mind? Jesus Christ had the mind of God, took care of those things required of Him, and prayed for the brethren often. That is our example of how to properly prioritize our time and demonstrate godly love.

## Praying for Others Creates Unity in the Body

We cannot be one body if we do not pray for one another and have concern for each other. We may believe the same things, but if that is all, we are merely individuals who believe the same doctrines. That does not represent a unified group of people; it is just a collection of strangers. Unity in the Body is not limited to agreement of doctrine. God demands more than that and something very different. We are to be concerned for others and look to the interests of others. Being in contact with the brethren starts that concern and interest. The followup is to keep those things in our prayers so we do not forget about them. The more we pray about the successes, joys, failures, weaknesses, and burdens of others, the more we will connect with them in spirit.

[C]omplete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:2–4, *Revised Standard Version*).

This is how we begin to share joy in others' joyfulness and sorrow in others' sorrows. Praying for others is not merely reciting their names and the happenings in their lives; it is about establishing a heartfelt personal connection. And with this personal connection comes unity. We cannot establish this personal connection and unity by our human efforts or desires, especially if we are geographically separated. You may ask: "Then how can I have a connection with someone I do not know or see infrequently?" The answer is, *you* cannot. God establishes it through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is a fact. Do you believe that? Jesus Christ did not see the Father while He was on Earth, but He and the Father were one. They were unified not only because they believed the same doctrine, but because they had a close, personal connection.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one (John 17:22).

This connection was established through the Holy Spirit, and we have access to that same Spirit! Personal connection with the brethren is a command from God and achievable through the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit. But, we must ask for this connection and unity through prayer; God does not automatically give it to us. This is another example of the work we do in our personal conversion. If we disobey Him and do not establish these connections and unity, are we sinning yet again and disappointing God?

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep (Romans 12:15).

Prayer is not the only way to accomplish this, but it is a significant and effective way to fulfill Romans 12:15. If we do not fulfill this requirement through praying for others, what is our plan and method to fulfill it? The more we live according to this scripture, the more unified we will become. Please do not underestimate the importance God places on having a unified body. It is a factor in determining our salvation.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Part of God's evaluation of our conversion will be based on our efforts to become a unified body. How will God judge us if we keep the Sabbath and Holy Days, yet refrain from actively creating unity with the brethren? Not frequently thinking about and praying for our brothers and sisters impedes the development of unity. Very often, we do not make these efforts because of selfishness or offense. We value our time too much and do not want to dedicate more of it to the service of others, especially those with whom we have issues.

We may keep His Sabbaths, but we may not adopt His character as much as He expects us to if we do not actively work to be unified, because unity within the Body reflects God's character. If we simply do not feel like praying for others, think it is a waste of time because it produces no results, do not make the time for it, or generally have a lack of concern for others, we may find ourselves in the danger zone of disqualification. It is that serious. Jesus Christ and the Father are unified. Jesus Christ prayed to His Father constantly to maintain that unity, which is our example. The members of a unified body who are emulating Christ, and changing their minds to be like Him, will pray for each other. Do you?

### **Praying for Others Demonstrates Character Development**

Heartfelt prayer for others demonstrates character development because it illustrates our continual outgoing concern and love for the brethren. By nature, we do not possess these qualities. We are selfish, arrogant, hateful, and want things for our benefit. When we begin to mitigate these traits and replace them with the attributes of the Holy Spirit, we demonstrate character development by a change in mind, a requirement for salvation.

This teamwork, unity, and love for each other picture what we will be like in the Kingdom. God wants us to develop these characteristics now. If we avoid adopting these

traits now, why do we think we will want to add them in the Kingdom? Because we will be fully God? We will be, and we will have the full measure of the Holy Spirit. We will be perfect in character. But, we have a down payment of the Holy Spirit now and have access to the understanding and power that it offers. Because of that, we need to begin changing our minds to reflect God's character, and praying for others is a vital aspect of it.

[Become] ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

What are we going to do when we fully receive supernatural power in the Kingdom? Are we going to use it for the good of others? This is one of the things God is evaluating now through our conversion process. Guess what? We do have limited supernatural power now! We have access to and inspiration from the Holy Spirit. We have a down payment of that Spirit, which is the means by which Jesus Christ resides within us.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with *power from on high* (Luke 24:49).

We must develop the habit of looking out for the welfare of others now because this character trait typifies a converted mind. It reflects God's character. Thinking this way must become a part of our character if we wish to be given direct control of God's power in the resurrection. If we refuse to use properly the power He has given us now, why do we think we will not misuse it in the Kingdom?

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him (Luke 19:20–26).

We each have been given a pound—instruction for changing our character—and are expected to generate a profit—a change in character. If we do not change our character by demonstrating concern for others, especially through prayer, are we any different from the servant who buried his pound? If you think you are different, then explain why you are.

### **Praying for Others Reduces Our Selfishness**

Taking time out of our day to pray for others helps reduce our selfishness by shifting our focus away from ourselves—something we do not excel at—and earnestly directing our attention toward others. Typically, when we pray, we reflect on what we want, what we lack, and what we hope others will say or do, along with a myriad of other concerns. Our thoughts often revolve around our wants, desires, and hopes. Prayer time tends to center on ourselves because we naturally prioritize the self. God made us that way, and Satan takes advantage of this tendency by amplifying our self-centered thoughts.

For all the times that we focus upon our successes, failures, joys, and problems, do not think that Satan does not likewise encourage us to focus upon ourselves. This is a masterful tactic that he uses, and we often unknowingly fall prey to it. The more we focus on ourselves, the less concern we will develop for others, and we risk falling into Satan's trap of not expressing genuine love. If we are not thinking of others, who are we thinking of?

Don't think only of yourself. Try to think of the other fellow, too, and what is best for him (1 Corinthians 10:24, *The Living Bible*).

Praying for others gives us a chance to lessen our innate selfishness. The more we genuinely pray for others, the less offended we should become, as the root of offense is selfishness. In simple terms, we become offended when we do not get what we want or when others do not behave as we desire. When that occurs, our carnal minds react defensively with hurt feelings or offense. If instead we pray thoughtfully and acknowledge another person's struggles, weaknesses, and flaws, we are remembering that a potential heir of God is facing carnal weaknesses just as we do. The more we do this, the less likely we may be to judge someone else's outward spiritual progress—based on our assessment of where they "should be" within the Body—regardless of how long they have been part of it. God strongly condemns such arrogance in judgment! That person also may be enduring a barrage of demonic pressure, which can exacerbate carnal and inappropriate reactions.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).



The greatest obstacle to Satan confirming his kingdom is the called of God. He hates them with a passion and is relentless in his devious attacks. Satan works through emotions. He will propel us to remain selfish and become offended. When we become offended, hold a grudge, do not give the benefit of the doubt, or nit-pick and make negative comments about others' quirks or shortcomings, he smiles. When we do these things, we make Satan happy. So, how often do we bring joy and happiness to Satan?

If we are heartfelt in our prayers about another's struggles, our innate selfishness should be reduced, and then we should be more likely to adopt a mighty trait of the Holy Spirit—kindness.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, *kindness*, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering (Colossians 3:12).

The more we understand the struggles that our brothers and sisters face and frequently remember that they, too, are fighting their carnal natures, the more we should recognize the requirement to be kind. We are to be kind because we should be developing the godly love that develops through prayer for others. And if we are developing that godly love, we will be less likely to focus on our hurt feelings, but instead, on the needs of others. The more we focus on the needs of others, both physical and emotional, the more we will be living according to the command in Colossians 3:12.

Don't criticize, and then you won't be criticized. For others will treat you as you treat them (Matthew 7:1–2, *TLB*).

Our minds and hearts should become more merciful and kinder as a result of praying for others. If we extend these qualities to others, we are more likely to receive them in return, even though we occasionally succumb to our faults and flaws and offend others.

### **Praying for Others Increases Our Compassion and Tolerance**

Praying for others can increase our compassion, tolerance, and longsuffering, and help us develop these foundational traits of the Holy Spirit, which are requirements for salvation.

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:8–9, *New King James Version*).

When we pray for others and think of their weaknesses, difficulties, or challenges, we are reminded of their many struggles and the constant battle that they wage against their carnal natures. Are they imperfect—making mistakes, and having character flaws? Absolutely. Do we think that, at their core, they are sincere in their conversion? We should. Otherwise, we step into the realm of negative judgment and assumption of bad motives. We cannot read hearts and minds.

How, then, do we view brethren who make mistakes and are still in need of character development? It depends. If we are looking through the lens of the carnal mind, we will frequently be agitated, annoyed, question motives, become offended, be quick to make negative comments, criticize, or be intolerant of others' personal quirks and differences. We can also become quite impatient with others. These behaviors and thoughts represent the carnal mind, reduce our peace of mind, and are often a result of our lack of empathy.

Empathy is the ability to identify with, or understand, another person's situation or feelings. In other words, empathy allows us to see a situation through someone else's eyes. It does not mean we must agree with them, just that we understand their perspective. When we do this, we are more likely to be tolerant because we will not assume evil motives or react selfishly in offense or with hurt feelings. Maybe at that moment, we will think of the other person and realize that they allowed their carnal mind to dominate in the same way that often happens to us. Maybe we simply falsely judged them and created our own offense. To be tenderhearted is synonymous with having empathy, which gives the benefit of the doubt. When we think, react, and view others through a lens of empathy, it will be more difficult to have negative feelings or personal hurt because we will not focus on ourselves, but on the other person.

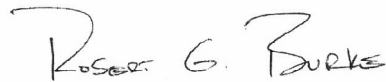
And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil [have negative feelings] against his brother in your heart (Zechariah 7:8–10).

In addition to empathy, the Apostle Peter and the prophet, Zechariah, instructed us to have compassion for each other. That is, we are to have a deep awareness of the suffering of another *accompanied by the wish to relieve it*. First, increased unity in the body will help generate awareness of suffering. Second, this is where the benefit of praying for others can be realized. When we earnestly pray and acknowledge another's suffering, our desire to relieve it should foster ideas on *how* to help. This is how prayers for others can translate into

service. But if we are not praying for others and do not have empathy or compassion for them, we will be less likely to find meaningful ways to serve them.

Prayer in general, and praying for others in particular, are essential tools for our conversion and hope of salvation. Prayer gives us the opportunity to connect with and grow closer to God. Praying for others helps us internalize the traits of the Holy Spirit and continue transforming our minds. The time we spend praying for others should aid us in becoming better Christians, as it allows us increasingly to change our minds to emulate God's mind. This change of mind is the essence of conversion. Thanks and glory to God, for He has given us the knowledge and power to do this in our quest for Eternal Life.

Your friend and servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert G. Burke". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and larger than the others.

Robert G. Burke

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and larger than the others.

Jon W. Brisby