

April 2026

Greetings Brethren:

The Spring Holy Day season is here. We have examined ourselves to determine how much we are in the faith, as God determines. We have partaken of the Passover and confirmed our dedication to Him, His Plan of Salvation, and our conversion process through personal overcoming. We removed physical leaven from our homes and continue the work of removing spiritual leaven from our minds and hearts. Our goal is to reduce and eliminate sinful, carnal traits of the mind and replace them with godly traits that resemble the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles Paul and Matthew wrote clear instructions for us to follow, and the reasons for them, so that our minds can resemble God's mind.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5).

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

We must let, or allow, Christ's mind to reside in us so that we become like God—the point of conversion. This is voluntary because God will not force us to change our minds. Simply being called and baptized does not automatically change our minds. Any transformation depends on our efforts. These transformations are not easy to make, nor can they be made by our efforts alone. God must give us the knowledge and ability to change through the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. If we truly want this conversion of mind and are willing to make the required efforts, just what do we need to change? What overriding trait of mind do we currently not have, but are required to adopt if we are to become more like God and think like Him?

Godly Love

Love. God's mind is the representation of complete love. Our minds and hearts are not only opposite of His, but they actively repel His mind. We naturally have an incomplete, selfish orientation to love. And even as our love matures into a more godly kind with our spiritual growth, we still retain an incomplete love because of the constant influence of our carnal minds. The concept of changing our view of love to God's way is simple to understand, but extremely difficult to put into practice because of the extent of the change required. It does not involve a slight adjustment; it involves a total transformation beyond our human abilities.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

From the Beginning

This was a revolutionary statement because the prevailing view of the day held that hating one's enemy was acceptable if, by countering that hate, love was extended to a neighbor. If love was shown to neighbors but not enemies, that constituted a level of righteousness. But Christ clarified this misconception during the Sermon on the Mount.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy (Matthew 5:43).

Christ acknowledged that hating an enemy was the prevailing, acceptable thought and teaching of the day. But He did not endorse the concept. He simply stated that He was aware of it. So, from whom did the people hear it? Who precisely said, or wrote, that hating an enemy was permissible? God never did. Under the first Covenant, people were not held spiritually accountable for harboring hate, bitterness, resentment, or other thoughts that God abhors. However, there is a difference between spiritual accountability and intent. From the beginning, God's intent for humankind was for them to learn not to harbor hate against one another. Let us examine, because the Old Testament writings command kindness and mercy toward enemies.

If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him (Exodus 23:4–5).

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink (Proverbs 25:21).

It is true that these acts of kindness and mercy could be given while harboring hate and resentment, which is why spiritual accountability was not held. But God's intent has always been for people to treat each other kindly, as well as to think kindly of them. The physical actions described in these verses illustrate God's spiritual intent in the same way the sacrificial system of Israel pointed toward Christ and the spiritual fulfillment of the Law.

The Apostle Paul explained the continuation of sacrifices by their transformation into spiritual sacrifices in his instructions to the Romans, which apply to us by providing guidance for spiritually-based thinking. He is instructing us on how a converted mind thinks like God.

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. . . . Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. . . . Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. . . . Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. . . . *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head* (Romans 12:1–2, 9–10, 14, 17, 20) [emphasis mine throughout].

Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21 in Romans 12 to show that loving our enemies has always been God's will, and uses Old Testament writings to clarify the spiritual intent. Paul is not simply describing actions; he is describing a mindset, and all these verses illustrate a godly mindset.

Loving Our Neighbors

Paul knew this godly mindset was clearly the intent from the beginning, as well as being familiar with the Levitical commands. Paul understood that God's intent was not just for people to help an enemy, for example, while at the same time hating that enemy, but rather helping with a loving mindset. True, there was no societal penalty for hating an enemy, nor were most people successful in thinking lovingly in this way, but that was not God's intent.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord (Leviticus 19:17–18).

And the second is like unto it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Matthew 27:39).

Relatively speaking, it is easier to love our neighbors when we want to. In fact, when there is a personal desire and will, carnal humans can extend what appears to be a lot of love toward others. Neighbor can broadly extend to family, friends, co-workers, and even strangers, all of whom can be the recipients of our love. The capacity of the human mind and heart allows for this. It is a built-in expression God created in mankind. But there are limits. Some people may naturally extend more love than others, but everyone will reach a maximum level which is below the potential ability of God's called, those who are inspired and led by the Holy Spirit.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? (Matthew 5:46–47)

Christ is saying that carnal hearts and minds can return love when it is received or extend kindness when desired. Welcoming those around us and treating them with affection and understanding is commonplace. Anyone can do this. Even the tax collectors could do this, even though they were considered by many at the time to be among the lowest in character and the most immoral of people. Christ is saying that acting this way is no different and demonstrates no greater character than the average person who does not hold to godly principles. The requirement of a Christian, however, is to go above and beyond these actions.

Loving Our Enemies

How far, then, must we go for our minds to resemble God's mind? Jesus Christ clarified in the parable of the Good Samaritan that neighbors include friends and enemies. If the commands in Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 27:39 tell us to love a neighbor as ourselves, then we must go to the point of even truly loving an enemy. We may think we do this, but loving an enemy is not satisfied when we feel we do not harbor resentment, ill will, or other negative feelings toward an enemy, and are simply neutral in mind toward him. The problem is that this is carnal reasoning and falls far short of the requirement of godly love. Loving an enemy to the degree God requires not only involves a total crucifixion of the self, but it also requires the Holy Spirit because, humanly speaking, it is impossible to do. Godly love, not human love, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and the only way to increase this type of love is through the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ was clear in His commands to love an enemy and also in providing guidance for accomplishing it.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil (Luke 6:35).

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful (Luke 6:36).

Concerning our enemies, then, we are to bless them, do good to them, pray for them, be kind to them, be merciful to them, and more. Do any of us earnestly do these things to all of our enemies? To accomplish this, we are to expect nothing in return, which our carnal minds demand! This is a mighty task. As we reflect deeply on the meaning of these commands, are we seeing more clearly how far short we fall in our actions and thoughts in transforming our minds, and how difficult a task this is?

Who Are Our Enemies?

Our arch enemies are Satan, the influences of society, and our carnal minds. These are the major forces that constantly work to keep us separated from God. We must fight against and resist these influences while we progress in our spiritual conversion. These are general concepts we know and understand.

If we break it down to a personal level, a classic definition of an enemy is someone who hates or opposes another person, tries to harm them, or attempts to stop them from doing something. A burglar breaking into your home to steal and cause harm. A co-worker who subverts you and falsely claims your achievements as their own for advancement within the company. A person who views you as dangerous and as one inciting violence due to holding traditional, moral biblical beliefs that oppose their "alternate" lifestyle. And eventually, those who are part of an apostate group or organization who revile you for adhering to the Faith Once Delivered, the Faith that they rejected. They will actively collude with powerful, influential people and organizations who are seeking to bring about your destruction.

For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. . . . And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries . . . (Daniel 11:30, 32).

These are examples of external influences which are easily understood as enemies. In our everyday lives, however, what is the simplest way to identify an enemy? A way that will help us correctly change our minds through intense self-examination that can significantly help our conversion? We must come to view an enemy as anyone with whom we have an issue. Any problem, real or perceived, for any reason. We make them enemies in our minds because we do not extend kindness and love to them or think about them as God requires. Using this definition can massively expand our understanding of who our enemies are and how a converted mind is to think.

What Kind of Love?

If we are required to love even our enemies, what kind of love are we expected to manifest? Each of us can easily have a different variation of the meaning of loving our enemies. Is that kind of love or affection different than the love we give to friends, family, acquaintances, brethren, or even to God? Let us begin by illustrating God's love:

For God so loved (*agapaō*) the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

This is my commandment, That ye love (*agapaō*) one another, as I have loved (*agapaō*) you (John 15:12).

But I say unto you, Love (*agapaō*) your enemies . . . (Matthew 5:44).

The present-tense Greek verb, *agapaō*, and its variations of *agape* as a noun, and *ēgapēsa* as a verb in the aorist tense, represent total love, godly love. It describes the love that God the Father has for humanity. It describes the love that Jesus Christ has for us. It describes the love that we are to have toward God. It describes the love that we are to have towards our brothers and sisters in the Faith. It also describes the love that we are to have for our enemies! God the Father and Jesus Christ intensely love each of us. We can comprehend the magnitude of that kind of love, correct? What, then, does this understanding mean for us?

This means we are *commanded* to love God just as He loves us. We are commanded to love one another, as brethren, in the same way. We are even commanded to love our enemies with the same *agapē*—Christlike, self-giving, sacrificial—love. Friendship (*philia*) and family (*storgē*) affection are distinct forms of affection, each with its own description and purpose, but neither is the type commanded toward enemies.

Serious questions for us to answer are: Do we love our enemies this way? Can we love them in this way? Do we really want to love them this way? Or, do we want to harbor negativity, the biblical equivalent of hate?

The Goal of Conversion

Why were each of us born? The simple answer is, potentially to become a member of the God Family. If we successfully complete our conversion process, we will inherit Eternal Life. What do we mean by conversion? The simple answer is to change from one thing to another. We are to change from our carnally-dominated minds to godly, spiritually-oriented minds dominated by love. We do not really have this kind of love yet, do we? Probably not. We are working toward it.

How will we gauge our progress in developing this kind of love? We will know we are making progress when we begin to see that we can truly love our enemies. The ones who harm us, denigrate us, challenge us, fight us, plot against us, subvert us, falsely accuse us, and so much more. We know them. They are the ones who treat us in the same way the Pharisees and Sadducees treated Jesus Christ. They lied about Him, called Him demon-possessed, a bastard, a fraud, a blasphemer, a deceiver, a Sabbath breaker, a glutton and drunkard, and an overall sinner. And after these things, what was His response toward them? How did He express His love (*agapē*)?

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37)

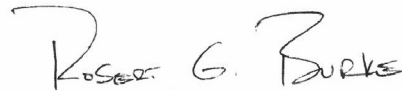
A hen gathers her chicks under her wings to protect them from danger, provide warmth, and ensure their safety from predators and harsh weather. This behavior demonstrates her dedication to nurture and safeguard her young. Christ uses this to illustrate the care, concern, and love He has for His enemies. Even when He was nailed to the stake, He expressed love toward His enemies.

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots (Luke 23:33–34).

Think of our enemies, those with whom we have any kind of issue, and list them in our minds. Do we cherish them and seek to nurture them as the hen to her chicks or as Christ to those seeking His destruction? No, we do not. Instead, we harbor a host of negative feelings. But, we are required to continue our change of thinking because this change is conversion; we have to think this way! "Be [become] ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

This perfection is illustrated when we can love our enemies. If we can change our minds to the degree that we can do this, we will be well positioned to demonstrate other fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives as God intends. We will show God that we do want to be like Him. This is the path to becoming like God and potentially inheriting Eternal Life. This is true conversion. This can be accomplished with God's help. May God continue to grant us His mercy, and the power and inspiration through His Holy Spirit to become like Him.

Your friend 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