

April 2024

Greetings Brethren:

God's Word is timeless, His teachings correct, and they guide us regardless of when they are given. His continuing instruction is valuable because knowing the Faith Once Delivered does not mean that our minds will automatically think according to those principles. We can know information yet think and behave in contrary ways. To help refresh our minds, this *Monthly Letter* will restate concepts that have been taught through sermons and *Monthly Letters* since the mid-1970s. These concepts should enlighten us on the current state of our minds and character development, and illustrate how much we have changed in the way God deems important. Since we will soon observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, this is a perfect time to focus on the progress we have made in adding godly character by reducing our default, carnal character. What a blessing it is to have this dedicated period for more introspection.

We know we must change our character to mimic God's character in order to be accepted into His Kingdom. That is a requirement. But change is not easy, especially when enemies are actively working to prevent it. And if we are being attacked by enemies, we must know them. Not only that, but we also need to know how to identify these foes and the effects of their dastardly works. Why? Because our primary enemies—Satan and the natural mind—are not seen. They are invisible and by not seeing them we may discount their influence. This is significant because it may cause us to become blind to certain sins or character flaws that need to be corrected. But when these adversaries are active, the results are not invisible, they surely can be seen and felt. By recognizing these results, we can properly evaluate where we stand as being influenced by them, and where we need more change.

Our Primary Enemies

We can see the influence of God's Holy Spirit manifested in specific ways—as identified in Galatians, chapter five—including love, joy, peace, and longsuffering. We also can see the effect of the spirit of Satan and the way of the carnal mind in specific ways. Each can be known, and we must know and understand both. Is the control being exerted on us from our minds solely, or is it enhanced by Satan's attack? Do we need to know the precise source if the results are the same? Not really, because both are destructive to our spiritual development. The uncontrolled influence of either can lead to spiritual death.

What are the signs—to a greater or lesser degree—of Satanic activity and the way of the carnal mind? Remember, we will be subjected to Satanic activity because we are called, and Satan will make every effort to adversely influence us. The prevalent types of Satanic activity exerted on our minds will be in the same fashion as those of Jesus Christ's. Sometimes the activity will be obvious. Other times, it will not. There are countless things we are working on and trying to remember for personal development, so a refresher on these points will be helpful to orient our minds correctly.

The topics in this letter will serve as a reminder of how far we fall short. No matter how much progress we have made in personal overcoming, we have not yet attained perfection and need to remember that we must continually exert maximum effort to continue growing in godly character. We cannot afford to become spiritually sleepy. We sin all the time, and need God's mercy and help daily. As we read the following information, we need to assess where we stand and accurately identify both with good and bad traits. When we see the bad traits in ourselves, it does not mean we are doomed to failure per se; it means we recognize our carnal frailties and shortcomings. And with that awareness, we should be teachable and take advantage of the opportunity for continued work on character development because that is foundational to salvation.

Do you understand and agree with doctrines that this remnant organization confirms as those having been revealed to an end-time servant, Mr. Herbert Armstrong, but still ask how to apply them personally? Do you say, "I get it, but how do I change my character? What am I supposed to do, and how am I to think differently?" The short answer will be found in the two lists which follow.

Evidence of Our Enemies' Influence

The wind is invisible, but we know when it blows. The reactions of the carnal mind and the prodding by Satan are invisible too, but we can see their effects. The following list contains only a few of the indicators that will help us to understand the effects of Satan's influence, as well as the effects of our carnal minds. These represent behaviors that God does not want in His Kingdom. If we catch ourselves doing these things, then we know precisely what God wants us to stop doing. Each day during the upcoming Feast when we eat a piece of unleavened bread, which reminds us to put sin out of our lives, we should be able to identify very specific and personal failures. If we do not, how can we ever change?

1. *Anytime we, verbally or by action, create conflict or division.* Direct and indirect statements that cause arguments or offenses create conflicts and divisions among brethren, and we know we are not to engage in that behavior. But even more

dangerous can be the subtle, quiet comments and criticisms that arise as our thoughts. They can cause equal, if not more, damage because in our minds they quietly and secretly disfigure a brother or sister in Christ. That is the evilness of Satan. Do our comments, spoken or in mind, cause us to separate and distance ourselves from others, or do they bring us closer together? Do they expose flaws and weaknesses, or cover them? Do they express tolerance of others or intolerance?

2. *Having confidence in the self and not relying on, or acknowledging sufficiently, God and His will.* This occurs when we attribute success to our abilities, rely on solving problems on our own, or fail to recognize God's involvement in our trials and difficulties. When we do these things, we distance ourselves from God.
3. *When we misinterpret what others have said or done, especially if it creates a negative opinion about that person or his motives.* The "facts" are evident, but do we tend to negatively distort the interpretation of them? We easily can because our minds are hard-wired to do this. This is dangerous because once a negative opinion is formed, our perception of another person can become tainted. The filter through which we hear and see things will be skewed and cause us to automatically think negative, divisive thoughts. It may be because we have allowed a distorted perception of events to dominate our minds, or else we have permitted offense to set in and we are reacting to it.
4. *Whenever we expose the difficulties or problems of others, rather than covering them.* If we pause and think about why we are making a comment or statement, can we confidently say it is to edify, encourage, or promote growth in some way? If not, then it is very likely a destructive comment.
5. *When we make accusations.* Simply put, false accusations are anti-Christ. They are central to Satan's mind and why it is so easy for us to make them. But do not just think in terms of grand-scale accusations. Simple, everyday critiques are more common. It often takes the form of a statement when we are convinced that we know what someone is thinking, how they view a situation, or their heart's intent. How many times do we make statements that are negative judgments of someone's heart and intent? How often do we jump to conclusions, because we cannot read hearts and minds but are simply assuming?
6. *When we make statements or have thoughts of bitterness, hatred, or resentment.* This is the mind of Satan. Whatever reasons we have for these initial thoughts, legitimate or not, we must battle to overcome them. Harboring this type of thinking means we resemble Satan—period. Putting off the old man means we change this way of

thinking and reduce it. Jesus Christ had every reason carnally to be bitter and to have hatred and resentment for how He was mistreated. But He showed us how to respond differently—in love. If we do not sufficiently remove bitterness, hatred, or resentment from our hearts, God says we will not be in His Kingdom. It does not matter merely that we agree with revealed Truths. A heart filled with these things does not reflect God's character and if not repented of, ultimately will be rejected.

7. *When we blame others and avoid personal responsibility.* Do we seem to be the victim perpetually? Do we frequently view other people as the cause of our problems or frustrations, and blame them? God allows abrasives in our lives, and He often will actively place them there for character development. God will deal with others and correct them whenever they are wrong. He is watching our responses to life and tallying them in His overall score of our overcoming. When we shift blame to others, rather than focusing upon the self, we fail at that opportunity and demonstrate carnal behavior.
8. *If we do not control our speech.* Wisdom dictates we know when and how to regulate our speech. "Good people bring out good things from their good treasure. But evil people bring out evil things from their evil treasure. I tell you that people will have to answer on Judgment Day for every useless word they speak. By your words you will be either judged innocent or condemned as guilty" (Matthew 12:35–37, *Easy to Read Version*).
9. *When we are intolerant of others.* Are we frequently annoyed, frustrated, or irritated by others? If the answer is yes, then we are intolerant of them. God made us all with different personalities, quirks, and demeanors. How we respond to these differences is part of our qualification and speaks volumes about our character.
10. *Anytime we judge or criticize others.* We judge someone when we negatively assume motive, orientation of mind, or heart's intent. When speaking, are we expressing something positive, or negative? If it is not heresy, do we judge or criticize someone because he does things differently than we do? If we criticize someone because we think he should be doing things differently, or in our minds "the right way," then we are arrogant. There surely may be better or more optimal ways, but that is not the point. The real question to answer is why is it a problem to us if things are done differently? The answer is that it represents a selfish carnal mind.
11. *Anytime we engage in verbal retaliation,* including mumbling under our breath or having to say the last word to prove a point. God condemns this kind of response and if we engage in it, ours becomes the greater sin. Do we see how easily that can happen?

12. *Uncontrolled reactions.* To what degree do we have knee-jerk, uncontrolled reactions that are not thought through? Do we constantly find ourselves immediately reacting and not intentionally restraining ourselves? An outburst may be a physical or audible reaction. It also may be inside our minds! This type of lack of control is a good indicator of the limited progress we have made in our conversion because it is inherent in a carnal mind. If we are frequently reacting without immediate mental control, we demonstrate a dominant carnal mind and most likely do not have peace of mind.
13. *If we are full of suspicions and mistrust.* Do we look at others and question their motives or actions? Do we get the "feeling" that they intended something negative, so we automatically become suspicious of them and doubt their motives? When we do, we demonstrate one of Satan's favorite tactics to cause division and hatred among brethren. We cannot properly love brethren if we are suspicious of them.
14. *When we are convinced of answers before all facts and perspectives are known.* Are we quick to "know" the story and generate judgments? How can this be if we do not know all the facts and relevant information? Do we easily recognize the potential for misunderstandings and seek to understand the other person's viewpoint, knowing that their reason may be valid? Or do we just react and give no room for misunderstandings because we have already decided the matter?
15. *If we constantly have a corrective attitude toward others.* Do we constantly find fault with others and eager to express how they should do things or why they are wrong? In particular, if it does not affect us, are we still quick to tell others what they should be doing? Believe it or not, that is reflective of a self-centered, arrogant attitude.
16. *If we find more joy in physical rather than spiritual things.* This is one aspect of loving the world that is easily overlooked. If we are driven by, or get more satisfaction from, the physical "stuff" of the world, then we are displaying a carnal mind.
17. *If we are full of false righteousness and hypocrisy.* This was an error of the Pharisees, and we need to avoid it. Have we finally succeeded at living an aspect of the Faith in a certain way, and then criticize or comment on others if they have not made that transition or growth yet? Be careful, it is probably self-righteousness. Claims to the contrary probably lack humility. Why? By commenting on our perception of someone's lack of growth we will not be employing patience, longsuffering, and empathy. We might actually be criticizing someone who is showing better tolerance for our transgressions. So, if we have room to grow, allow someone else the same.

18. *When our feelings become facts in our minds.* Just because we feel someone said or did something for a particular reason does not mean it is true. Can we trust our feelings? No! Satan is a master of manipulating feelings to divide. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)
19. *If we are argumentative.*

A Converted Mind Will:

1. *Overlook infractions to create peace and eliminate problems.* Peace happens because of active effort on our part. One way this is accomplished is by looking past things and letting them go, and not holding onto them. This will maintain peaceful interactions with, and thoughts of, others. A carnal mind has difficulty doing this because it is designed to hold onto grievances.
2. *Allow for another's judgment or preference first, out of respect.* "Love each other in a way that makes you feel close like brothers and sisters. And give each other more honor than you give yourself" (Romans 12:10, *Easy to Read Version*).
3. *Accept personal fault without the need to prove someone wrong.* Accept our part in any situation, be critical of the self, but have maximum tolerance for others.
4. *Resist judging others and show gentleness and kindness.* The more converted one is, the more he will have compassion for others and remember that each person is growing spiritually at a different rate. He lets others make mistakes knowing that they are fighting their carnal nature, as well as battling the attacks of Satan. He patiently allows others to grow spiritually and lets God intervene on his behalf in His time.
5. *Resist being easily offended.* Offended means to be irritated, annoyed, or angry; to be upset and hurt, or have annoyed feelings. *The converted do not get upset easily, allow hurt feelings, or get annoyed.* This is because they constantly see themselves as God sees them; weak and flawed. They know these are often carnal reactions due to a hurt self and have trained their minds to strive to get past them quickly.
6. *Refrain from accusing someone, knowing facts or circumstances may have been misread.* The converted will not jump to conclusions, will wait for more information, and be willing to change an opinion once more information is offered. They will be fair-minded.

7. *Control what is spoken*, which really reflects what is in our thoughts. "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion" (Proverbs 18:2, *Revised Standard Version*).
8. *Assume the best intent from others*. If we truly believed others were sincere in their conversion, often struggled with their weaknesses, and had positive intent, we would not be so critical of them. How could we, if we believed they meant well? We can be highly critical if we think like an unconverted person.
9. *Be merciful, kind, forgiving, and empathetic*. Does this describe us?
10. *Look to the needs of others and serve*. The converted person will be praying and searching for ways to serve the brethren. He will not be predominantly geared toward selfish and personal desires.
11. *Intentionally avoid arguments, criticism, or comparison with others*.
12. *Always give the benefit of the doubt* by assuming a positive motive or intent.
13. *Does not retaliate in word or thought*. A soft word or response is often given.
14. *Shows humility*. This often occurs when we pay attention to someone else's point of view, focusing on them, and avoid defending the self. For example, if people recall an event differently, do we "dig in our heels" and refuse to yield to the other person? Must we defend our stance and prove we are right? Or do we peaceably reconcile the possible differences and move forward?
15. *When possible, do good to enemies*. Why? Because the converted know an enemy is a potential child of God. A converted mind will not unnecessarily condemn an enemy, continue to expose sins and wrong actions to others, or speak disparagingly. "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; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:44–45).
16. *Learn to control emotions and resist reacting without evaluating the proper response*. If an improper reaction occurs, it is pushed away quickly. This takes active effort and is an undertaking that the converted mind has been trained to do.

17. *Correct the self, not others.* The converted happily let God work with others in their conversion and show them patience and tolerance while working with them according to His timing and purpose.

Are We What We Think We Are?

This is quite a listing of positive and negative characteristics, and we most likely will be a mixture of both of them. The key question is which set of characteristics seems to represent us most often? After reviewing these lists, do we see ourselves as very carnal, or do we see ourselves as making great strides spiritually?

The influence of Satan and the carnal mind is pervasive and can sneak up on us. Before we know it, we may resemble more of the items on the first list than we think. Since we are following certain doctrines and making sacrifices in our lives, we may lose sight of the important work of character development. How easy and comfortable is it to let the mind be itself? It is so easy that if we do not assess it daily, and compare it to a godly standard of behavior, we may effortlessly and unknowingly revert to a carnal mindset.

Why Do We Worship God?

One of the reasons we worship God, and why He wants us to worship Him, is because it helps us see ourselves as He sees us. No excuses. Just plain, raw, weak, flawed people. God has revealed Himself to us, which allows us to properly comprehend His Majesty and Perfection. He is a good God. He is just. He is love. When we come before Him and worship Him, giving Him praise and honor, we should be able to see how inferior we are in character by comparison, even after a lifetime of spiritual growth and advancement.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

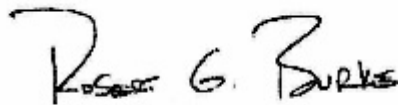
How beautiful is that statement! We will be able to see and comprehend God as He is, completely, because we will be like Him. We will have been born into the God Family. We will have qualified for this by the successful demonstration of a change in our character, which is shown by our thoughts and actions.

But now you must refuse to do all kinds of things like that. Do not become angry with people or shout at them. Do not do anything or say anything that

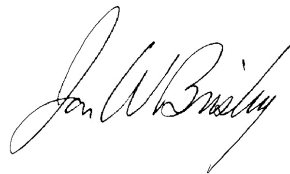
will hurt other people. Do not speak any bad or disgusting words. Do not deceive each other with lies. Remember that you have taken off your old nature [list number one], like an old coat. As a result, you can stop doing all the bad things that you liked to do before. Now you have received a new nature [list number two]. It is God who made it for you so that you can become more and more like him. You will learn to know him better and better (Colossians 3:8–10, *Easy English Bible*).

The work we do is not easy. Admitting the flawed parts of ourselves can be painful and takes effort. Adding righteous character takes maximum, sustained effort. But through it all, we can have peace of mind, joy, and abundant life. Knowing that we have the opportunity to spend Eternity in happiness and love should give us the strength and focus to complete our life's work.

Your devoted servant,

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