

**“Watch, Stand Fast in the Faith”
(2 Cor. 16:13)**

It is alarming to see how much unrest is occurring among churches of Christ in our day--more by far than at any time in my lifetime. Influences from the culture seeking to conform the church to what human wisdom thinks will make it more palatable to the world (known as the Emergent Church Movement) and influences from those who want the church to be a denomination among denominations (known as the Change Agent Movement) have, and are, disturbing churches throughout the world. In many instances these disturbers of church unity and peace have not fully revealed their sinister plans, but with enticing words have deceived the hearts of the simple (Col. 2:4; Rom. 16:18). In the name of the truth they “secretly introduce ruinous divisions” (2 Pet. 2:1--TCNT) and “because of what they do, people will speak evil of the way of truth” (2 Pet. 2:2--TEV). “In their lust to make converts” (2 Pet. 2:3--Philips), “they will exploit you with false words” (2 Pet. 2:3b--RSV). These words from Paul and Peter may sound harsh but when improper things were being said and done that disrupted the peace of the first century church, the inspired writers blasted them with both barrels! There are two ways that we can respond to what is happening in many places. One, we can passively watch it happen, hope it will go away, and sit idly by while these disruptive forces continue to “secretly introduce destructive heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1--RSV). “But,” someone says, “they are so friendly, so loving, and their worship is so uplifting!” Of course, these attributes are good, but the question that must be answered is this: “Did they start out right?” The foundation does affect the whole structure. Two, we can “stand fast in the spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27-NKJV). Which do you think we should do?

The servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will--2 Tim. 2:24-26--NKJV.