

## What Ever Happened To Self-Control?

**"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." - Gal. 5:22, 23.**

"Don't suppress it, express it", has been the prevailing human wisdom concerning one's feeling for a generation or so. The idea being that it is unhealthy to hold back your feelings, so just clear the air by letting them go - for your own good of course. Now all of that may sound good - but it is just not what the Bible teaches. It is no wonder that there are many families in shambles, many communities in turmoil and many congregations saturated with strife.

Whatever happened to old fashioned self-control ("temperance" - KJV). It was part of apostolic preaching (Acts 24: 25). It is one of what has been called "The Christian Virtues" (2 Pet. 1:6) that a Christian is to add to his life. It is a part of the fruit of the Spirit.

In spite of all of this, many brethren seem to be caught up in the idea, to one degree or the other, that to keep any negative feeling to oneself and God, is not healthy. So, passion gives way to overt action in either word or deed. Rather than working to control the wrong and/or negative feeling and trying to put it to death - just freely express it to get it out of your system. We have seen so much of the free - expression in the so called "sexual revolution". But that is not the only way it manifests itself. If you are un-

happy or disappointed ("unhappy" and "disappointed" sounds better than "angry") with anyone then you just simply must let it all out and let them know about it at the first possible opportunity - to "clear the air", of course.

The idea of suppressing one's feelings or even working on changing one's feelings about the matter before hanging them all out for all to view seems to be out of the question. No wonder that "biting and devouring one and other" has all but become the order of the day.

The works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 are the results of such a philosophy of free expression. While most brothers and sisters in Christ are willing to suppress and change any feelings before they get to overt "fornication", "idolatry" or "murder" level - they are not as careful about other expressions of hatred, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambition, dissension, heresy, and envy. These things have a great deal to do with destroying harmonious relations between individuals. It is no accident that Paul listed the "works of the flesh" right after warning against biting and devouring one another. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit are things that enhance peaceful relations between people.

People are physically hurt every day in the name of standing for the right (witness: the religious war-fare of Ireland and the Middle East). I know that not many people that I know would condone such. Yet, we may hurt folks in ways other than physical in the name of standing

for what's right - when it may just be nothing more than our freely expressing bad feelings of anger, envy, selfish ambition and the like. It may be that we have been influenced by the free-expression philosophy more than we realize and think that if we see something in one we dislike, that we simply must let him know about it regardless of it's nature or the discomfort it may cause the other party.

**"I had much rather say it to his face, than to say it to his back"**, is an often used excuse for unloading on another over things that we dislike about them or their actions. Proposition granted - if these were our only options! But it **may not be good to say it at all**. Sometimes a slap in the face can hurt nearly as badly as a stab in the back.

It just might help before we rust off to talk it out (or have it out) with another to talk it out with ourselves and God - see if it might not be a time to hold back (self-restraint or control) and to exercise some long-suffering and forbearance. If we must always freely express our feelings about things we dislike in or about one another, then I would like to know when "longsuffering, forbearance and self-control" would come into play.

**"Had you not rather one told you his real feelings about you or something you do, than to harbor resentment?"**, we are asked. Again if these were the only options, the answer is, yes. Again, would it not be better to work on ones real See "SELF-CONTROL", Page 4

# An Appeal Concerning Marriage

**Edward O. Bragwell, Jr.**

Those who are members of the Lord's church are to live a life separate from the world (James 1:27; I John 2:15; II Cor. 6:17). But, the church has always had a problem with members adopting the philosophy and practices of the world about them. Those in Corinth accepted immorality (I Cor. 5), while those in Pergamos seemed to allow idolatrous practices (Rev. 2:14). These were things that were the norm in the world of that day and there were some in the early church who seemed to do little to discourage the practice of these things even among their brethren. It is truly sad when things that God hates are accepted and practiced by His children.

One of the things today that is an acceptable practice of the world, an abomination to God, and seems to be adopted more and more by those who claim to follow God is the matter of divorce and remarriage. I am amazed with the attitude that I see more and more among the people of God concerning this matter. Hardly a week goes by that I don't hear of another case involving members of the church. No one seems to be untouched anymore, including preachers, elders and their families. It is frightening what is happening.

It is disturbing to see couples who have been married twenty to thirty years breaking up. They ought to be old enough to know better. But I guess since I am still young, that it is especially disturbing to me to see what is happening to my generation. Because our generation has seen the development of the women's movement and the **always do what is best for me** philosophy, we seem to be especially vulnerable to ignoring God's way and accept-

ing the philosophy of the world when it comes to marriage. I don't know exactly why this is, but it is possibly because we have allowed ourselves to be influenced too much by worldly influences - books, TV, movies, humanistic educators, etc. Whatever the reason, we need to return to the wisdom of our Creator.

I see my generation becoming more and more mixed up when it comes to the matter of marriage. Too many that I grew up with, and I am talking about those who have grown up in Christian homes and have become Christians themselves, have mixed themselves up in messy divorces and unscriptural marriages. I grieve greatly for them. It is time that we wake up and determine that we are going to follow the wisdom of God in this matter regardless of the influences of the world. (See Matt. 19:1-9)

If you are married, determine that you are going to follow all of God's law concerning that relationship. Determine that you are going to treat your spouse with the respect that you should (Eph. 5:22-25). Determine that you are going to be faithful to your spouse (Heb. 13:4; I Cor. 7:1-5). Determine that you are going to live with your spouse "until death do you part". Do not let the influences of the world sway your determination to follow God's plan for you in marriage.

If you are yet to be married, please consider all that God says before you enter into that relationship. Of course, a Christian who is considering marriage must consider many things concerning his potential spouse. Whether or not that person is a Christian, what kind of spouse he or she will be, how well you will get along, and so on. But what disturbs me greatly is the number of

young Christians that I have noticed lately that give no consideration as to whether the potential spouse is eligible for marriage. God says that one is not eligible if one is divorced for any cause other than fornication. I hear more and more cases of those my age who are marrying or considering marrying those who have no right to marry. What's more, some older Christians at times encourage them to do so. I suppose this is a growing problem since more and more young people wait longer until they get married. As a result, many of my friends are already married and unfortunately more and more of their acquaintances are even divorced. Because of this, I see many young Christians in their search for a mate, fall for one who has no right to marry. One who is in a situation like this may feel that this is what he or she has been looking for. It is seen as the last chance for true happiness, a way out of loneliness, what one has always been looking for. I think I can understand these feelings, being one who is rapidly approaching the age of thirty and still unmarried. However, is anything or anyone worth losing your soul? I think not. Let us determine that we are going to follow God's law regardless of our emotions and the influences of the world. It is better to enter into heaven alone than to march into hell with a spouse that you have no right to.

My prayer and my hope is that this generation and those following it will get back on the right path in regards to all that God commands, especially regarding the matter of marriage and divorce. We have headed in the wrong direction for too long. It is time to turn about and shun the philosophy and advice of the world. What about it?

# Professional Buzzards

Don Truex

The bane of every congregation is, and forever shall be, "he that sows discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:19). Like the idolator of old, the seeker of strife is an abomination unto God Almighty, (Proverbs 6:16). To his brethren, he is a source of never-ending frustration: it is difficult to deal with one who is clearly contentious but shrewd enough to portray himself as a lover of peace. But, just as there are some marks of identification for the good, and righteous, and peace-loving and peace-seeking Christian: so also the sower of discord may be identified.

**The Sower of Discord is CONSTANT IN CRITICISM.** Nothing satisfies. Nothing pleases. Every aspect of the local work is meticulously dissected by a critical heart and tongue. The sower of discord is, in many respects, a professional buzzard. A buzzard will fly over a hundred acres of verdant, green, lush grass and ignore it all until he spots a rotting carcass upon which to swoop. So also, the sower of discord, refuses to recognize and appreciate the good and beneficial and praiseworthy; but is quick to swoop down upon any perceived imperfection.

**The Sower of Discord usually WORKS PRIVATELY,** (2 Peter 2:2). Like the Pharisee of old, he will "compass land and sea" to find a sympathetic ear. He seeks out and exploits his "friends." He seeks those preceived to be "weak members" who will not understand his design nor know how to cope with him. Before and after the services he busies himself with anyone who will give an ear in an effort to stir some strife. Honest brethren are often deeply discouraged.

**The Sower of Discord LOVES AN ARGUMENT.** It does

not matter how ridiculous his position or how illogical his reasoning nor how novel his idea: the sower of discord is ready to press it to the fullest. The Bible calls him contentious (Romans 2:8), but he fancies himself a spiritual tower of strength.

It is Jehovah's will that we "walk worthy of the vocation" wherewith we have been called..."endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians

4:1,3). It has never been His desire that Christians "bite and devour one another" (Galatians 5:14). The impenitent sower of discord is, according to the New Testament, to be "marked and avoided" for he has switched his loyalty from Jesus to his own whim and desire (Romans 16:17-18). Do not be guilty of encouraging the sower of discord by arguing with him, or by giving his foolish contentions a receptive hearing.  
--Plainfield Church Bulletin

## You Get What You Pay For

Martin L. Bragwell

The prophet, Jeremiah, found himself in difficult situations for no other reason than the fact that he spoke the "Word of the Lord". (Jer. 1:2) He called the people to repentance but found only ridicule and eventually imprisonment for his efforts. (Jer. 38). Why would a simple messenger of the Almighty be treated so harshly? His message would not allow the people to be comfortable in their sin! For many, comfort is of more value than truth and salvation. If false prophecy would buy them some temporary peace of mind then that would be their desire (Jer. 6:13-14). The old adage, "You get what you pay for" could not be more applicable. A temporary peace of mind was exactly what these people had bought by their failure to repent and their attempts to silence the prophet. However, it ended much too soon as they were taken away into captivity.

Paul warned Timothy of the same thing. (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Many ears are still "itching" today and there are still "heaps" of teachers available to do the "scratching". Many today will buy themselves temp-

orary comfort and peace of mind through the use of such teachers. But remember, **You get what you pay for!**  
--Martinez Bulletin

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### SERVICES

#### Sunday:

Bible Study...9:45 A.M.

Worship...10:45 A.M.

Worship...6:00 P.M.

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study...7:30 P.M.

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### Our Next Gospel Meeting

November 11 - 16

Irvin Lee

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### Wednesday Morning Class

Our Wednesday morning class will resume October 3, 1984 at 10:00 A.M.

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### ATTEND ALL

### SERVICES

# "God gave them up", Not "Thank God"!

"Thank God, I am gay", read the placard, as big as life, on the TV screen during TV's coverage of the Gay-rights rally from San Francisco the day before the political convention out that way.

I had to turn the TV channel before my stomach did. Such a blasphemous sign! Besides taking another good word (gay) and linking it with such filth, it is an affront to God and all who love Him! The very idea of boasting of being that way, but implying that God made them so!

These characters want to be accepted by society, the powers that be, and decent people as respectable members of society who just happen to have chosen an "alternate life-style". The sad thing about it is that they are fast gaining that respectability (?) - even in the eyes of many religious leaders in America.

There is a distinct danger that such behavior will become so widely accepted that Christians will get so used to it that they will no longer view with utter disdain. Christians must not forget that they must "abhor" evil. (Rom. 12:9).

The Bible is clear what God's attitude is toward such: "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of

their error which was due... who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." (Rom. 1:26,27,32). -- Editor.Δ

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## SELF - CONTROL (Concluded)

feelings and resentments first and learn to be a little more patient and longsuffering -- learn more self-control rather than unbridled self-expression?

At times, when sin is involved, we should not hold back, but in the right spirit, "tell him his fault" (Matt. 18:15-18) using the scriptures to "reprove and rebuke" (2 Tim. 3:15 - 4:4) -- even at the risk of making an enemy because a soul is at stake -- without forgetting about gentleness and kindness. But, let us make sure that it is sin that we are after and not just any action or characteristic that we might find distasteful or offensive. Or just a way of getting something off our chest so that we will feel better about it. Then, if we are not careful we will be more concerned about our comfort than theirs.

Too, "tell him his fault", does not mean "tell him off". It may or may not even involve a rebuke. If it appears that he has indeed sinned against me, (not just merely done something I don't particularly like), I do not have to immediately demand repentance -- a mere asking for an explanation of the incident

might solve the problem. It is possible that one's actions might not be as they seemed to be on the surface when one is allowed to explain himself. Does not "love, peace and gentleness" ("fruit of the Spirit") suggest that we could at least assume the possibility of a satisfactory explanation before we assume guilt and become offended?

Many a relationship has been damaged beyond repair simply because people have either never known or have forgotten the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Standing for the truth of the gospel is going to produce for us enough enemies (Gal. 4:16) without our producing any more by our biting and devouring one another by being too open and free in expressing frankly our every dislike with one another, rather than working on ourselves to develop the fruit of the Spirit. Let's not hide behind the lame excuse that they need to be told "for their own good". If we are not careful, we will be saying that it is for their own good that they shape themselves according to our self-imposed ideas of conduct and that gets mighty close to selfish ambition -- which is a work of the flesh. Editor.Δ

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WHY NOT HAVE  
A BIBLE CLASS AT  
YOUR HOUSE SOON!  
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