

# THE OAKWOOD ROAD CONTENDER

"....exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith..."

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## Trying To Save The Church

It seems a great number of people these days are "trying to save the church." The zeal and efforts of these hardworking brethren are commendable, even when, in some cases, they seem more intent on "saving" the church for their own pet projects than for the Lord. Somehow I have more respect for those who will try to save the church for something than for those who do not care what happens to the church.

There have been times when I felt I wanted to save the church. In my hour of triumph I could see myself on a great white charger, banners flying into the heavenly castle with the church safe beside me . . . or something to the effect. In more sober moments, however, I noticed that those who were then trying to save the church were having difficulty finding a church to save. There are lots of riders, and great white chargers, but few maiden churches that are in distress - or, that will admit it. The picture is all wrong.

And then I remember that Christ is the Saviour of the church (Eph. 5:23), and He is fully capable of handling the job. As I reflect upon His "modus operandi," several facts are outstanding.

Christ saves the people, one at the time. The message which Christ preached, though taught to great crowds at times and "shouted from the house-tops," is of such a nature as to demand self-denial and humble obedience from each individual who would receive it. It is by this process that the church exists. Christ is "Saviour of the body" by saving each "member"-b ringing souls, separately, under subjection.

Christ does not "try to save the church," He IS Saviour of the church. The members, one or many, who are faithful unto death will be given a crown of life. In a sense, the members who, in great throngs, go "marching on" in digression and apostasy are not the church of which Christ is Saviour. They more nearly correspond to the virgins who lacked oil for their lamps or to the

man at the feast without a wedding garment. Christ is author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. ( Heb. 5:9).

It is altogether possible that in "trying to save the church" today we have confused the "party" -whose pride must be maintained, and whose "place" in the world must be upheld-with saving "a soul from death" that we might "hide a multitude of sins." (Jas. 5:19-20). When we obey the gospel the Lord "adds" us to His body (the "called-out" people), but we must "join ourselves" to the disciples of the local church. (Acts 9:26-28). We select as our associates in the Lord's work those whom we believe to be "walking in the light," in fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, hence our brothers and sisters in the family of God. But we must remember that we have fellow-

Sometimes a person joins a certain political party because he believes that this party stands for the truth and right. Perhaps it does, at the time. But it is possible for allegiance to the party to become so strong that finally one will defend the party, thinking that in so doing he is defending the truth. TRUTH does-not change, but unfortunately people - and parties - do.

Our allegiance must be, first, last, and always, to God and to God's TRUTH. In our desire to "save the church" we must realize that the party (the people) may go astray but that God's truth does not waver. Our efforts must be spent on prayerful study of God's Word - to know his truth - and then on turning or keeping the people faithful to this truth. In restoration, even as in the salvation of alien sinners, each soul must be treated individually. It is well to exhort brethren to be ONE (I Cor. 1: 10f) but unless this unity can be obtained upon the divinely delivered faith, it is a hollow mockery. What has been gained if we "save" the oneness of the people but "lose" the souls of the people? This article is not written to make light of "oneness" among brethren, nor of efforts made to "hold the church together" in times of trial It is written to remind us that there are right and wrong ways of "saving the church." The "end" is salvation in heaven, not a "glorious party" on earth.

-Robert Turner

Article appeared in Truth Magazine November 1958.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

|          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| March 5  | Joshua 5-7   |
| March 6  | Joshua 8-10  |
| March 7  | Joshua 11-13 |
| March 8  | Joshua 14-16 |
| March 9  | Joshua 17-19 |
| March 10 | Joshua 20-21 |
| March 11 | Joshua 22-23 |