

It Is Written

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Time And Truth

By Dan S. Shipley

Early in the first century, Christ sent the Spirit of Truth to guide the apostles into all truth (Jn. 16:13 Acts 2:1-4). The New Testament records that truth which these inspired men wrote and taught. This gospel truth was being preached, believed and obeyed before the middle of that first century. Over 1900 years ago, souls were being saved from sin through the knowledge of this truth. The implications of this simple fact are profound.

Think of it! A sinner could be saved in obedience to this gospel over 250 years before the Nicene Creed was formulated; long before there was a Catholic church to establish "Divine Tradition" or "interpret" the scriptures; over 500 years before Catholicism had a universal Pope; before Catholic doctrine of celibacy, sprinkling for baptism, instrumental music in worship, transubstantiation, purgatory, extreme unction, holy orders, Mary-worship, confession before priests--and over 1800 years before the doctrine of Papal infallibility.

Think of it! An individual could be reconciled to God through Christ over 1450 years before the Catholic monk Martin Luther made his historic protest; before he advanced the false notion of justification by faith only; before his name was worn by anyone except his family.

Think of it! Men and women could become CHRISTIANS, live and die with the hope of heaven, over 1450 years before there was a Church of England (Episcopal) or a Presbyterian church; before John Calvin and his false teaching on predestination, direct operation of the Holy Spirit and infant baptism!

Think of it! Men were being redeemed by the blood of Christ over 1500 years before John Smyth began his work which resulted in the establishment of the first Baptist church; over 1650 years before John Wesley and the Methodist church; over 1750 years before Joseph Smith, the father of Mormonism, received his alleged revelation; which was about the same time the Adventist group had its beginning under the leadership of William Miller; over 1800 years before Mary Baker Eddy's "revelation" and Christian Science; over 1800 years before there was a Jehovah's Witness sect to knock on the door or distribute the Watchtower paper!

Think of it! The simple gospel of Christ was providing men with ALL THINGS pertaining to life and godliness over 1900 years ago! (2 Pet. 1:3) It was furnishing men completely unto every good work at that early date (2 Tim. 3:17). That gospel truth provides the basis for man's becoming, being and doing ALL that God requires of him, is further evidenced by the fact that men will one day be judged by this very gospel (Jn. 12:48).

Think of it! If ALL of the combine religious creeds, ideas, doctrines, concepts, opinions, "revelations," and traditions of the past 1900 years should perish, men could STILL know how to serve God and be saved! Is it not time you considered uncluttered, unadulterated New Testament Christianity??

The Use Of Tracts

By Gene Taylor

Tracts can be, and are, useful tools to have when teaching others about the gospel of Christ. Many are available on a number of different subjects. Some are written for those outside of Christ who need to learn the first principles of the gospel. Others are written to expose denominational error. Some are intended for the member of the church who is practicing and/or teaching doctrinal error in order to get him to abandon his erroneous teachings and practices which are contrary to God's word. Still others are written to edify and strengthen the faithful.

Tracts can effectively spread the gospel to those who are in need of hearing it. Even though many people are reluctant to attend the services of the church, they will accept a tract and read it especially if it has been given to them by someone who they believe is genuinely concerned about their spiritual well-being.

Christians need to avail themselves of every opportunity to evangelize. Even though the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16) places the burden of spreading the gospel on every generation, some fail to fulfill their share of the responsibility to it because they feel inadequate to do a good job. Using tracts, along with diligent study (2 Tim. 2:15), can help them overcome such feelings of inadequacy.

Some caution, though, needs to be exercised when using tracts to teach.

First, you must recognize that a tract is written by a man who is not inspired and it has no inherent authority.

The Bible is the sole source of authority in religious matters (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 John 9).

You should not distribute tracts indiscriminately without knowing what is contained in them. Error can be just as easily taught by tracts as truth is. Any tract must be carefully read and compared to Scripture to see if its message is true. Only when its teachings are found to be in harmony with the word of God should it be given to another person. It is just as wrong to teach error by circulating an erroneous tract as it is to teach false doctrine from the pulpit of the church building.

Tracts must not be used as a substitute for individual study and growth. Tracts can be properly used by any Christian whether young or old in the faith, but they should not be used as a "crutch" by those who lack personal initiative to study and grow. There is no method of instruction as good as the personal teaching by a knowledgeable child of God. All Christians are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) and not just rely on such aids as tracts. Tracts are not printed to promote lethargy.

Use tracts. Use them wisely. Use them for the salvation of others and for the glory of God. Check out the tract-rack today and keep a good supply on hand.

TURNING FORGIVENESS AROUND

By Greg Gwin

We hear it frequently in the news these days. It has been a common defense in some high profile criminal cases. The basic argument is that people can be excused for committing even hideous crimes if they can demonstrate that something awful happened in their past. Unfortunately, this approach has proven successful in our perverted justice system. Murderers, kidnappers and sexual offenders of every sort have been set free or have had their sentences reduced. As a result, we are seeing more and more criminals rush to assume "victim" status.

It is happening in the church, too. It is not uncommon for sinful brethren to attempt to "turn the tables" on those who are trying to restore them. "You didn't show the proper love toward me;" "You were unkind and didn't help me enough when I needed you;" "You were too harsh in the way you rebuked me;" etc., etc., etc. You see, they have learned how to become the "victims."

We agree that brethren can sometimes approach situations in the wrong way. All of us need to show love, forbearance, patience and kindness. Sometimes we fail in these things. Everyone can do better.

But, we are weary of sinners turning the whole matter of forgiveness around. If they have their way, the faithful ones are forced to beg them for forgiveness, while their own sins are ignored. This simply will not work!

Observe the case of Peter rebuking Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:18-24). Simon was told that "wickedness" and a bad heart had left him in the "gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Surely he could have complained about Peter's harsh words, or unloving manner. Undoubtedly he could have countered with accusations about how he had been mistreated by others. Instead, he humbly accepted the rebuke and requested prayer. Sinners in the church today need to learn a lesson from him.

SLANDER

By Greg Gwin

Do you know the definition of "slander?" Have you heard slanderous remarks? Have you ever been guilty of slandering anyone? These are important questions when we remember that slander is a sin that can damn our souls. Notice:

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31 - NASV).

"But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth" (Colossians 3:8 - NASV).

The King James Version uses the words "evil speaking" and "blasphemy" in these texts, but the meaning is the same. We most often think of "blasphemy" against God, but in its most literal sense the word means "to vilify, or to speak against"; and it can be done against God or man. A modern English dictionary offers this definition: "a malicious, false, and defamatory statement or report." Slander typically happens when brethren get "out of sorts" or angry. Often it involves someone trying to justify his position or excuse his bad behavior. Its goal is to make someone else look bad. The easiest way to do this is to issue a false report. It usually goes like this: "Did you know that brother So-and-so believes that it is a sin to _____." "You don't mean it!" "Oh, yes, that's his position." "I just can't believe it! Have you heard him say that?" "Well, he's never come right out and said it, but that's what he believes alright." "Have you gone to him to discuss this matter?" "No, it wouldn't do any good. He's real stubborn and closed-minded you know."

Brethren, this is the sin of slander -- DON'T DO IT!