

Hickory Grove church of Christ
1131 Hickory Grove Rd.
Almo, KY 42020-9332

Return Services Requested

Sunday Services:

Bible Classes

Worship 10:00 a.m.

9:00 a.m.

6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study

7:00 p.m.

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Readers' Response, *Continued*

"Please unsubscribe me and I thank you for courage to edit and publish Banner of Truth. And thanks for the number of years that you made this editorial available to me. I [admire] your dedication to your work. I commend you for your faith in God our Father, and Jesus our Lord and Savior. I hope you can continue to publish your Banner of Truth and continue to serve. Thanks for your service and the mailings" – **Burch Anderson, TN.** (*It has been good to have you as a reader for a number of years, and appreciate your words of encouragement – Editor.*)

"This past Wednesday night one of the members of the congregation I preach for presented me with a copy of your Feb. 2004, Banner of Truth. She said she had found the paper at her doctor's office and couldn't put it down; the reading was to the point and according to the Bible. I would like to be added to your mailing list if possible. I believe Christians need to keep informed and should read good publications of the brotherhood. Thanks in advance" – **Tim McCafferty, AL.** (*Your name has been added and you should be receiving BOT. I grew up about 25 miles from Florence, just in the edge of Tennessee. Many changes have come about in the church in Florence. – Editor.*)

"I appreciate you and your stand for the Truth" – **David Shanks, MO.** (*We have changed your address – Editor.*)

"Please add us to your mailing list. We enjoy reading your paper. Thanks" – **Steven & Jeffier Martin, AR.**

"Many thanks for your lively periodicals that I have started receiving" – **Ade Ajetunmobi, Nigeria.**

"We enjoy 'Banner of Truth.' Would like to be added to your mailing list. Thanks!" – **Ben & Joyce Ferrell, KY.** (*We'll add your name. Pass it on to others – Editor.*)

5th Banner of Truth Lectures

June 24-27, 2005

**Why not start making plans now
to attend that spiritual feast?**

Has your address changed? Why not help us by sending your new address? It will help us to save on our expenses.

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Banner of Truth

"The truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

Vol. 13

August 2004

No. 7

Scriptural Baptism, An Integral Part Of Every True Conversion, Is Misunderstood, Ignored, And Perverted By Many People

It is interesting to note that some words in the Bible, which are of great importance, are seemingly most likely to be misunderstood, ignored and even perverted by a great many people.

A splendid example of the above is the word "love," which in its most used form (Gr. *agape*) is found more than two hundred fifty times in the New Testament. It is defined as that which has the well being of others, even all men, at heart, and works no ill toward any. It is manifested in doing the will of God. John said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 Jno. 4:3). Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Love is most often used incorrectly to mean toleration, compromise, speaking only the positive, and never speaking criti-

cally of error. When the word is used correctly, it is shown by doing God's will, by upholding His word, and helping those in error and the untaught to see the right way of God.

There is another Greek word (*phileo*) used in the New Testament and translated "love." It is used about 25 times, and represents "tender affection" between close friends, family, etc. We are not commanded to have this love for all men. It appears that many people confuse this word for love with the higher form of love which is most often used in the New Testament.

The word "faith," is another misunderstood word. It is often used in religious circles to mean a simple assent of the mind. But "faith" in the sense by which we are justified, is a faith which "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). James said, after giving the example of the faith of Abraham, "Ye see then

BANNER OF TRUTH

Published by the
Hickory Grove
church of Christ

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Published monthly and sent free to interested persons. Made possible by the contributions of congregations and individuals. Our purpose is to: 1) Teach and uphold God's truth; 2) Encourage mission efforts to seek the lost; 3) Oppose that which is "contrary to sound doctrine" and not in harmony with the "doctrine of Christ."

(Continued from page 1)

how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24). James goes on to say that "faith without works is dead also," just as a body without the spirit is dead. The apostle Paul speaks of "obedience to the faith" (Rom. 1:5). God-approved faith is that which is alive, active and obedient. Due to a misunderstanding of faith, it is a common thing for religious people to declare that salvation is by faith without any works or activity on the part of man. Millions have a false hope of salvation because they have believed this teaching of error.

A third important word which is very often misunderstood, ignored and perverted is the word "baptism." Just as an understanding of the words "love" and "faith" is essential to salvation, so is a proper understanding of the word "baptism." To get some idea of the importance of baptism, consider the fact that baptism is the final step in ev-

ery conversion recorded in the book of Acts in the New Testament. Not even one conversion occurred without baptism being a part of it. But in spite of the fact that the importance of baptism is shown so clearly in God's word, only a miniscule part of those who claim to be Christians have been scripturally baptized.

Let us briefly consider clear teaching regarding the importance and necessity of baptism. We will compare our findings to some of the beliefs and teachings concerning this subject. Every group claiming to be Christians, which I can think of, practices something they call "baptism." However, when compared with baptism in the New Testament a great many differences are noted.

Not only are there serious problems among the denominational people with regard to baptism, an increasing number of problems have arisen among our own brethren, especially within the past two or three decades. Such was virtually unheard of when I obeyed the gospel in 1953. We have been influenced by those religious people round about us, relative to the meaning of baptism and a number of other important things.

As we continue our discussion we shall give attention the following main topic, along with some sub-topics.

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE ESSENTIALITY OF SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM

John's baptism. The first reference to baptism in the New Testament is in Matthew 3:6. Matthew is discussing "John the Baptist" when he said, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." John also baptized Jesus. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him" (Matt. 3:16).

Fellowhelpers

May, June, July 2004

Pine Ridge church of Christ	150.00
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Total May — July Contribution \$2,507.25

"That ye may be fellow-helpers to the truth" (3 John 8).

We are sincerely thankful for those who make our work possible as our fellow-helpers.

Banner of Truth Financial Report

May, June, July 2004

Balance on Hand May 1	15,622.58
May — July Contribution	2,507.25
Total funds available	18,129.83
May — July Expense	
Mailing BOT and other postage	1,667.57
Unit for copier 1	29.92
E-mail	65.85
Phone	9.62
Belt for folder	12.52

Mailing labels	69.03
Ink	108.76
Plates for printing	50.00
Copier for making own plates	624.00
Total Expense	2,737.27
Total funds available	18,129.83
Less May — July expense	2,737.27
Balance on hand July 31, 2004	15,392.56

We continue to be sincerely thankful for our brethren who support our efforts in behalf of the Lord's work. Without you we couldn't be getting the message out to the thousands in this country and in a number of foreign lands. - Editor

READERS' RESPONSE, continued

"I sent some of my family members copies of your publication and have mailed you a letter asking that they be added to your mailing list. I'm sure you will get it in a few days. But, I got an e-mail from my brother-in-law and want to share his comments with you: See below—

"I received your package Friday evening and spent several hours yesterday, while living without cable or TV, reading the several editions. What a great publication. I don't think I have read or heard the truth like this since I was a child. I remember Nenaw telling of her father who would attend various denominations and call them on their practices. Of course he was invited to leave most times, but that did not deter him from going again and again. He was a Baptist (I think) that heard the truth and exercised his faith for the remainder of his life. I never knew him, or don't remember him (he died when I was three or four). ...

"I enjoyed those very much and will send an amount to get on his mailing list. It seems to me all the churches of Christ should use something like Banner of Truth as a "quality check" of their own actions (of course their worship is "quality checked" by the Word of God, but a little self-examination can't hurt.

"I notice how some folks that receive the publications were insulted, which seems reasonable. Most people who are wrong will not admit it (I hate it when I am wrong...) and hold other folks accountable for their misinformation, etc. Anyway, enjoyed the pubs and will get on their mailing list." J.E. Parten. (We appreciate the letter from Joe F. Travis, which included the letter from his brother-in-law. Our readers can have a part as a fellow-helper by passing BOT on to others who are interested. Our mailing list needs to increase somewhat. - Editor).

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Growing Pains At NWFSBS

The Milestone church is on the move. This giving church reached way down deep and built a new facility for church and school. Her proclivity for giving financially is equally matched in a willingness to work and give time as well. Elders, deacons and scores of members step up and show up whether it be door-knocking or grass pulling. We are having sure 'nuff gospel meetings designed to convert sinners. Hours each week folks in the area are able to view, via cable, sermons preached in the Milestone pulpit. This church puts its money where its mouth is in the matter of "visit[ing] the fatherless and widows," and "do[ing] good unto all men" when "opportunity" arises. We are teaching and baptizing people: seven in the past few months; we are restoring people; our attendance is growing: a recent P.M. high of 95. Little wonder then that the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies, Milestone's work, is caught up in this positive aura. The school is on the move.

We have a bumper crop of students and prospects in the wings. We guarantee solid, sound, and balanced training for these men. This is a rare opportunity for men to "call time out" on life for two years, that they might devote themselves to intensive study and practical training. Doing their part, they will be great assets to the brotherhood.

The long and short of it is: NWFSBS is in the middle of a "good" problem—growth. And boy, do we ever need more friends to help us spread the pain. Two of the crop (each with wife and child), *Jamie Hoskinson* and *Josh Lifford* are both here, in our charge, yet considerably lacking in needed monthly support. Can you help us? Can you point us to people who might?

Call us: (850) 474-9257; 968-2207; 937-2460. Email us: anailwun@nwfsbs.com. Web address: nwfsbs.com. We need you. —AA

READERS' RESPONSE

"Cloe Jordan recently let me read a copy of Banner of Truth. As an elder in the Lord's church at West Side in Searcy, I have tried to keep abreast of what is happening in the church and in our schools. Please add my name to your list of readers and send Banner of Truth when published" — **Alan Robinson, AR.** (*We commend you for keeping abreast of what is happening in the church and in our schools. Elders can do so much to keep things the way they should go. In my fifty years of preaching I've seen many changes in both the church and our schools. I'm sure you've seen many changes also — Editor*).

"Could you send info on NIV? I see where you have sent some from the May/June issue of BOT. If you would be willing, pass it along to me. I enjoy the paper BOT. Would you send it to... You are doing much good. Keep on keeping" — **A. Horton, AL.** (*I'm sending some material which I trust will be helpful. The NIV is a dangerous version but many brethren are using it. — Editor*).

"Thank you so much for Banner of Truth. I have a cousin (member of the Lord's church) which used to get your paper but doesn't anymore... They asked me to order it for them. They really appreciate it. God bless you in your work for the truth" — **Wanda Thompson.** (*Some times people don't send their change of address, and we delete them from our mailing list. Some times we get two or three returns from the same address because the post office doesn't return them to us until much later — Editor*).

"Thanks for your article exposing what is happening at Lipscomb. My wife and I are graduates of Lipscomb (40 years ago) and sent all three of our children there, but we would not recommend it to anyone now. I believe the liberalism at Lipscomb began long before Harold Hazelip became president, but it certainly gained momentum under him. Keep up the good work! In Christ" — **Rod Rutherford, TN.** (*Isn't it a great shame that our schools are not what they used to be? It is sadder still that many brethren will not do anything to try to change things. I have had reports of some getting out of sorts about the article. Some do not like to face reality and the facts — Editor*).

"I receive Banner of Truth every now and then. Someone brings them along. I truly enjoy reading them very much. It has great scriptural teaching and keeps one up to date on what is happening in the Lord's church. I'd like to say thank you very much for Banner of Truth. You have a great ministry in sending these books around the world. Keep the good work for the Lord and His people. I'd like to receive this magazine when it is available, if it is possible. Thank you very much. I am a member of the Eastern Shore church of Christ in Tasmania, Australia. May the Lord bless you" — **Janet Bailey.** (*We will be happy to add your name. Thanks for writing — Editor*).

John's work was that of the forerunner of Christ. Luke says of John: "...the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness, And he came unto all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Lk. 3:2-4). We note here that John's baptism was for "remission of sins," just as the baptism of the great commission is for remission of sins.

Jesus, or his disciples, and John were baptizing at the same time (John 4:1-2). But John said of Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). John, Christ, and the disciples were preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The church would soon be present.

What is baptism? To the people in the first century the meaning or the action of baptism was clear. The confusion as to the meaning of baptism, which exists today, would begin when men began to mix their minds and their ways with God's word as a basis for action.

Matthew says, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water..." (Matt. 3:16). "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salem, because there was much water there..." (John 3:23). "And as they [Philip and the eunuch] went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Luke says further, "and they went down both into the water...and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water..." (vv. 38-39).

In view of the above, the idea that baptism involves only a little water "poured" or "sprinkled" on a person, doesn't make any sense at all. There would have been no need for "much water" or the need to go into or come up out of the water, if only a cup of water was needed to baptized a per-

son, as many erroneously believe.

In addition to the mention of water above, baptism is referred to as a "burial." Paul says, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized in Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him in baptism into death..." (Rom. 6:3-4). To the Colossians Paul wrote, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein ye are risen with him..." (Col. 2:12). In no sense of the term is sprinkling and pouring a burial.

In addition to the above, and fully conclusive, is the meaning of the word "baptize." The Greek word *baptidzo* or *bapto* is the word used in the English translations for "baptize." It means to "dip, immerse, plunge, submerge," according to Greek lexicons. It is never used to mean "sprinkle" or "pour." There is a Greek word for that. Immersion was practiced for centuries after the first century. God's will has not changed but the practice of men has changed.

What is the purpose of baptism? First, it is for the "remission of sins." On the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, the Jews, after being told they were guilty in the crucifixion of Christ, were pricked in their heart, "said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do" (Acts 2:37). Note the answer given by Peter, bearing in mind that he was speaking "as the Spirit" directed him. He could not be wrong in his answer, as follows: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Ac. 2:38).

When the Lord appeared to Saul, he was directed to go into the city to be told what he "must do" (Ac. 9:6). Saul, having arrived in the city as directed, was met by one Ananias, who said to him, "And why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Ac. 22:16). It was at the act of baptism that God would "wash away" his sins. If Saul was "saved" before he

was baptized, he was saved while still in his sins.

According to Mark's account of the Great Commission, Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mk. 16:15). In order for one to be saved there must be the remission or forgiveness of sins.

To get into Christ. Let us consider the great importance of being "in Christ." In Him there is redemption. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..." (Eph. 1:7). Salvation is "in Christ." "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). All spiritual blessings are "in Christ." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

How to get "in Christ." From the above we can see the importance of being "in Christ" where there is forgiveness of sins, salvation, and all spiritual blessings. Therefore, it is extremely important as to how one gets in Christ. Paul said, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3). Paul again answers the question of how to get into Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Here we have the inspired answer to that important question of how to get into Christ — baptism.

The "one body." To be "in Christ" is to be in His body, the church. "And hath put all things under his feet, and give him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). To the Colossians Paul wrote, "And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church..." (Col. 1:18). "There is one body, and one Spirit..." (Eph. 4:4). It is most important to be in the "one body" since Christ is "the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23). The only way into that "one body" is through baptism, as we have noted.

Saved without baptism? Contrary to the belief of millions that one can be saved without baptism, God's word teaches otherwise. There is no lack of valid evidence from His word that such is the case. We have seen that baptism is for, or in order to, the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Saul was told to be baptized to "wash away" his sins (Acts 22:16). Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Luke says, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Lk. 7:30). This has reference to the baptism of John, which was also "for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4). Those who "gladly received his [Peter] word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Ac. 2:41). "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (v. 47).

The "doctrine of Christ" clearly sets forth the fact that baptism for remission of sins is essential to salvation. It should be a cause for serious concern on the part of those who have not obeyed the Lord in baptism, as we see in the words of Christ: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). I would hate to face the Lord in the Day of Judgment, having failed to obey his will with respect to baptism.

We shall move on in our discussion to another important matter relative to baptism, as we suggested in the title of this discussion.

THE MANY INSTANCES OF MISUNDERSTANDING, IGNORING, AND PERVERTING THE TEACHING OF GOD'S WORD ON BAPTISM

Due to the lack of space we can only consider a few of the many examples of the above. It seems to me that there is as much error, if not more, on this subject than any other in the Bible. It is most difficult to understand why many people will accept the teaching of God's word on such impor-

son who would like to have the right to go through the Bible and pick and choose what suits him.

Back to Matthew 22:37-38—True, this passage doesn't specifically mention the church, but does it follow that the church is not involved in our obligation to love God with the totality of our being? Neither does this passage say anything about faith or repentance. Is it possible for one to *love* God, but not be obligated to have faith in God, or be willing to repent of his sins? My friend would say (and, most people would say), "If you truly love God, then you will have faith in Him; you will desire to repent of your sins." Now, that is correct interpretation. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). Neither can a person possibly *love* God, nor Jesus, without also loving the church that the Lord "purchased with his own blood" (Ac 20:28).

COMMON SENSE AND FIGURES OF SPEECH

The Bible, like any other work of literature, often uses various figures of speech. Apparently not everyone understands figures of speech, notwithstanding the fact that most people use them regularly. Several years ago, I painfully learned that not all people understand nor appreciate figures of speech. In our congregation was an elderly sister along with her elderly daughter. These two ladies were faithful in their attendance, but they were a bit eccentric. One Sunday morning at dismissal, I was shaking hands and saying, "Bye." With a typically beaming face, I shook hands with the mom and daughter and said, "Ya'll behave yourselves." Later the phone interrupted my lunch. It was the elderly mother and she wanted to know why I thought that she and her daughter needed to "behave," saying, "We always try to act right in church." This was one of the rare occasions in my life when I was at a loss for words. I frantically scrambled for a response; finally, thinking it appropriate to explain a figure of speech, I asked, "Have you ever heard anyone say, 'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.'" She responded, "Well, I'm frying a chicken." That conversation went nowhere in a hurry. Anyway, I trust that most people do not have quite that much trouble with figures of speech.

One such figure of speech is technically called *synecdoche*. This is a figure of speech where you use a part (like one representative of a group or category) of something to stand for the whole: like *bread* for *food*. Admittedly, the word synecdoche is not a part of common parlance; but, even if you just call it plain *Fred*, it is still a common figure of speech that we all regularly use.

If someone says, "Hey, let's go get something to eat," it doesn't take literary analysis to understand that *eat* also includes *drink*. When the Scriptures say that "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Ac 20:7), it doesn't take a professor to understand that "break bread" also includes "drink[ing] of that cup" (I Cor 11:28).

Think of how our denominational friends "willingly forget" (2 Pet 3:5) this simple figure of speech. Denominational preachers will reel off dozens of passages that connect belief or faith with salvation (e.g., Jn 3:16; Rom 5:1; Eph 2:8). Since these passages do not mention other things, particularly baptism, they conclude that they are excluded, that sinners are saved at the point of faith: in other words, faith only. No, in all these passages "faith" is a part of what is necessary, and it is used to stand for the whole. Consider Acts 11:18 which speaks of "repent[ing] unto life." There is no mention of faith here. Do we conclude that faith is not required? No. Repentance, like faith, is a part of what is necessary, but here it is used to stand for the whole. What about Romans 10:10 which says that "confession is made unto salvation"? It's the same principle: The part for the whole. When the Bible says that "baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet 3:21), does this mean "baptism" without "faith, repentance, and confession"? Once again, this is the figure of speech where the part is used to stand for the whole.

It is a terrible thing to see people playing word games with themselves.

In the cool dawn of the morning, can people who excuse their disobedience with such sophistry really believe what they all too often glibly say? Somehow the claim, "It's a matter of interpretation," rings hollow in view of the judgment to come. —AA



Just A Matter Of Interpretation

A friend and I were once discussing the Bible; unfortunately, we were in agreement on very few points. He finally made a statement that I could agree with: "It's all just a matter of interpretation." Although, I agree with the statement, I cannot agree with my friend's application of it. He, like so many, views interpretation as a purely personal or subjective exercise; along the order of watching a movie and saying, "I like it," or "I don't like it." I believe this matter calls for a bit more thought and analysis. Let's look at this matter of "interpretation."

TYPICAL THINKING ABOUT THE BIBLE APPLIED TO OTHER AREAS OF LIFE

My Dad was a genius in the field of electronics and communications, but he was a terrible speller. He would often call home and ask the correct spelling for words he was using in some report. I clearly recall his asking one day if the word *water* had two Ts or one. I told him, "only one." Now, suppose my Dad had responded by saying, "Oh well, it's all a matter of spelling." It's true: Whether, *w-a-t-e-r* or *w-a-t-t-e-r*, in either case, you have surely "spelled." So, it is a matter of spelling; but it doesn't follow that *any* spelling will do. There is *correct* spelling, and there is *incorrect* spelling. So it is with interpretation; one can do so correctly, that is in accordance with certain objective rules and principles, or one can do it incorrectly.

INTERPRETING INTERPRETATION

I used to spend a lot of time struggling with the inseparable twins: interpretation and translation and. I would translate things from Chinese to English, and from English to Chinese. Sometimes, it would be oral translation, sometimes written. Good, clean, precise, correct translation/interpretation is based upon objective rules of definition, grammar, syntax, etc. Then of course, one must also take into consideration culture, history, and other related things in order to understand what is meant in the original language. Many people operate under the misunder-

standing that translating is a simple tit-for-tat, or this-for-that process; but it's not quite that simple. Then there is also poor, sloppy, ambiguous, incorrect translation. Would it be reasonable to simply say, "Oh well, it's all a matter of interpretation"?

To *interpret* something simply means, "to explain the meaning of." The Greek New Testament uses the word "hermeneuo," which is often translated into English as "interpret." Our English word *hermeneutics* also comes from this Greek word. Hermeneutics is the formal science or field of interpretation, especially the interpretation of literature. Yes. Understanding the meaning of the Bible *is* a "matter of interpretation." However, in interpreting the Bible, it doesn't follow that we are free to attach to it just any meaning that pleases us. Are there not certain objective rules and procedures that must be followed in order to correctly interpret the Bible, or even the newspaper for that matter? Paul says that we must "rightly divide [handle aright, ASV] the word of truth" (2 Tim 2.15).

This common practice of saying whatever you might *wish* that the Bible said, and then trying to cover your tracks by saying, "Oh well, it's all a matter of interpretation," makes no sense at all. Why not try writing an overdraft on your checking account, and then tell the bank that it's just a matter of arithmetic? Or, Get caught stealing and tell the judge that, after all, it's just a matter of making a living.

INTERPRETING WITH AN AGENDA

In the aforementioned discussion between my friend and me, he mentioned, as an example, that Jesus said the "first and great commandment" is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt 22.37-38). He went on to triumphantly say, "See, he didn't say anything about the church here." My friend believes that one can *love* God and not have anything to do with the church. His principle of interpretation is this: When *a statement in the Bible specifically mentions one obligation, and does not mention any others, we may conclude that the one obligation mentioned is all that is necessary.* This is a commonly held, yet patently false notion of interpretation. It is derived from wishful thinking on the part of a per-

tant subjects as: faith, repentance and confession of faith in Christ, to manifest a spirit of pure rebellion when it comes to the subject of baptism. Paul says we are not ignorant of the devil's devices, and some have suggested that the refusal to accept God's word on baptism is one of those devices.

Over the years I've received a few letters of criticism, relative to things I have written on the subject of baptism. A brief review of some of those criticisms reveals the tragic misunderstanding, ignoring, and downright criticism of the truth on this most important subject.

Our first example is that of the response of an elderly person to an article in my church bulletin entitled, "What About Infant Baptism." I will note some excerpts from that letter, and will number them for the purpose of my response to them.

#1. "In answer to your Reminder, Yes, I was baptized when a baby, and am mighty proud of it. My parents were good Christian people and they were so happy when the Good Lord gave them their children they were happy to give them back to the Lord in baptism. The Bible doesn't say what age & all; babies have sponsors that answer in their stead & remember them in their prayers."

#2. "I've been a Lutheran for 72 years..." "I'm just as proud to be a Lutheran as I am to be an American."

#3. "The Methodist and Catholics also baptize babies."

#4. "The Bible doesn't say Jesus was put under water. It says he walked straightway into the water and straightway out. But you must remember that was the only way it could be done. As all rivers and creeks have banks. Jesus was baptized by John in the River Jordan. All the pictures I have ever seen of the baptism of Jesus was Him standing in the water with John pouring water on his head."

No. 1. We can understand how it would be easy for one to follow the religious tradition under which he has been reared, and feel content or happy. But when we consult the Bible we learn

that feeling right is not the criteria by which one determines whether or not God is being pleased. Paul, before becoming a Christian, believed he should persecute Christians (Ac. 26:9), but he was wrong, dead wrong.

No. 2. We do not wish to speak unkindly toward those of the Lutheran denomination, or those of the hundreds of other denominations, but we do want to point out the fact that the world never heard of the Lutheran Church until the sixteenth century when Martin Luther came on the scene. Christ did not purchase the Lutheran Church with his blood. The only blood-purchased church was his own (Ac. 20:28).

No. 3. We must call attention to the way by which religious practices are authorized. Paul points out that faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). In view of this fact, nothing can be done by faith on the basis that some religious denominations do those things. One may search the Bible from beginning to end and no authorization for the Methodist or Catholic Church will be found. These religions came to be by the will of man, not by the will of God.

No. 4. When the Bible says Jesus was baptized, it meant he was immersed, for such is the meaning of the word "baptize." Paul speaks of baptism as a "burial," and that indeed is the meaning of the word. Our reader must know that there are no real pictures of Christ. Any painting depicting the pouring of water on one's head, of Christ or anyone, is a work of error. Today, those who practice sprinkling and pouring and call it baptism do not go down the banks to a river or creek. It would not have been needful in the case of John. Surely, a cup of water would have been available.

Such as the above is an example of the basis of much teaching of error in our day. People are guided by something other than God's word. We should remember the words of Christ as he spoke to the scribes and Pharisees. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

It is most likely that this critic would claim to believe in the Bible as God's word, yet there is not a single verse given which upholds the practice of infant baptism. Those who "abide not in the doctrine of Christ" do not have the approval of the Father and the Son (2 Jno. 9).

Another critical response to scriptural baptism was from a Baptist preacher. A weekly newspaper article we ran in the local paper was entitled "Where Is Salvation Found?" In the article it was pointed out that salvation is "in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10). It was also pointed out that one must hear God's word and believe it (Rom. 10:17), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10). When one has reached this point it is then possible to get into Christ by obeying the Lord in the act of baptism.

In response to the above article, a "Deepest Sympathy" card was received from a Baptist preacher. The card's message read:

"Dear Mr. Pigg, You are such a nice friendly man. I feel sorry for you and your people because you do not understand the truth. This card is to show you my sympathy – such fine people who are deceived. I saw your article in the paper. I'm sorry you do not believe faith is enough. Sincerely, John Bishop.

It is strikingly strange that Mr. Bishop would "feel sorry for," and show his "sympathy" to people for believing what God's word clearly says, as in the above article. What has been said that is not true? What is there about it to indicate that we are "deceived"? Are we the ones who have "rejected the counsel of God?" The apostle Paul commended the Bereans by saying of them, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Ac. 17:11). Would Mr. Bishop say that Paul was deceived when he wrote the scriptures referred to in our article? If not, how can he say we are deceived because we believe them? Didn't Paul receive

the gospel from Christ? (Gal. 1:11-12).

In a conversation with Mr. Bishop he unhesitatingly affirmed that one is "Saved at the very moment he believes in Christ." Mr. Bishop also believes there are two baptisms now, spiritual baptism and water baptism. Yet Christ says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16), and Paul says there is "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). Who fails to understand the truth in this instance? Mr. Bishop believes that faith alone (without any works) will save. Did James fail to understand when he said, "Ye see then how by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?" (Jas. 2:24).

Mr. Bishop also believes that when one is saved "the moment he believes," that he will not want to sin. But, he says, if a man does sin God will kill him physically. If he sins and God does not kill him, he was not saved to begin with. Yet, he feels sorry for us that we are "deceived" and do not "understand the truth."

The above is an example of one who does not respect God's truth, but rather ignores it and ridicules those who do love and respect it.

Another example of error on baptism. The following is a letter from a critic of my teaching on the subject of infant baptism. I will number the paragraphs in order to respond.

#1. Dear Christian Brother, I am writing you in response to your statements regarding infant baptism. I hope you will receive these words in the spirit of Christian fellowship that they are given.

#2. You stated that because they are without sin and baptism is for the remission of sin, that they need not be baptized. Paul tells us in Romans 5:12, 'that all have sinned through the sin of Adam.'

#3. How old is old enough to believe? Jesus warns in Matthew 18:6 'that anyone who leads astray any of these little ones who BELIEVE in me would be better off with a millstone,' etc.

#4. There may be no specific mention of infants being baptized, likewise there is only one mention

11). This implies acceptance of their error on the subject of baptism, as well as other teachings. Denominational people do not teach the truth on the subject of baptism. And, when our brethren fellowship them they are implying one of two things: First, that denominational baptism is accepted by God; or second, salvation is available without scriptural baptism, just as F. LaGard Smith believes and hopes.

The names of a few well known brethren are out front in the fellowship and encouragement of the denominations, but these are only the tip of the mountain of error which has infiltrated our ranks. Even right here in our own area there is the fellowshipping of denominations. Some of these people are not widely known, and from information I receive the same thing is happening all across our country.

Earlier we discussed the importance of being "in Christ," where many blessings, including salvation are found. Yet, these denominational people are not even "in Christ," because the only way to get "into Christ" is through baptism and they don't believe in and practice true baptism. How can our brethren deny the distinctiveness of the Lord's church, which he purchased with his own blood? But they are.

Apparently, some of our brethren have bought into the lies that used to be hurled against us by those who do not believe in scriptural baptism. We used to be called "water dogs" and accused of "water salvation," and other unjustified criticisms, because we believed God's word with regard to baptism.

Brethren, how can we fail to believe that baptism is an integral part of conversion, and that it is misunderstood, ignored, and perverted by many people, including a growing number of our own brethren? Yes, many are "depart[ing] from the faith," as Paul warned. May we seek the Lord's blessings in upholding His word, by which men are saved. — *Editor*

Singing During The Lord's Supper?

I have received questions concerning a growing practice of congregational singing during the observing of the Lord's supper. It used to be that innovations involving worship seldom occurred. In more recent times this has changed. Singing during the Lord's supper is just one of them.

Some time ago this practiced was discussed with a member of the church where this was being practiced. This individual's response to the practice was excellent, in my estimation. The response was: "I can't take of the Lord's supper and sing at the same time, and keep my mind on both as I should." This makes sense.

Why do such practices start? It has been my observation that such is not done with the idea of pleasing the Lord, but rather as something that is new and/or different, and might appeal to the people. A year or so ago I was at a singing in our area. A young man got up to lead a song. He made several requests, such as: Only the soprano sing a stanza, then the tenor, alto, etc. I had the distinctive feeling that what he was doing was not with a view to please God by singing, but rather he was acting as a "show-off."

In I Corinthians 14, worship services are discussed. That was during a time when spiritual gifts were in use, but that doesn't change the principle which is set forth by Paul. He said, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (v. 40). Singing during the Lord's supper is not, in my estimation, "in order." Some times it appears that people do unusual things to call attention to themselves, not to please the Lord.

Several years ago some brethren were sitting in the floor in a circle, turning the lights down low, and feeling of each other. Where in the world did such a far-fetched thing as that come from. No doubt, it came from men out in left field, not from God's instructions. - - *Editor*

“But,” someone will ask, “suppose a person dies after coming to believe in Christ but before the time he is to be baptized. Does this mean he would not be saved?” As with every other question dealing with man’s salvation, only the God of all Judgment can answer that for us. I would be neither surprised nor disappointed if God were to save in this situation.” (Page 93).

Do faithful believers who were baptized only as infants stand in eternal jeopardy? Are those who have committed their lives in faithful service to Jesus Christ, but who have never been taught the need for water baptism, spiritually lost? Can it be that those who see baptism as a matter of obedience, but not of salvation, are risking God’s judgment? (Page 200).

None of us can presume to know about the eternal destiny of anyone, on the basis of any question of doctrine — be it predestination, charismatic gifts, the washing of feet, or even baptism. All we can do is give our best efforts to knowing God’s will, as revealed in His written Word. (Page 201).

Are unbaptized believers destined to hell? Are those who have received only infant baptism in eternal jeopardy? Only God knows...

Nevertheless, I would hope that God might apply the ‘common law marriage’ approach for those who have lived a lifetime of service in His name without having participated in the wedding ceremony of baptism. (Page 206).

Brethren, there you have it. This influential man, a teacher at David Lipscomb, would not be surprised or disappointed if God saves people who have not been baptized. Do those baptized as infants stand in eternal jeopardy, he asks. He continues, we can’t know about one’s eternal destiny on the basis of any question of doctrine, even baptism. Only God knows whether unbaptized believers are destined to hell, he says. The real clincher is set forth as follows: “Nevertheless, I would hope that God might apply the ‘common law marriage’ approach for those who have lived a lifetime of service in His name without having participated in the wedding ceremony of bap-

tism.” (Page 206).

Just think how much encouragement the above will give to those who think they can be saved without submitting to God’s will in obedience. Talking about fueling the fire of disbelief in God’s word as the only way of salvation: This adds many chips to the fire. It is an affront to God to “hope” and “believe” that God will do other than what He has stated in his revealed will for man. If we believe and hope that God will overlook His will with regard to baptism, why wouldn’t we believe that He would also overlook His will in other areas? How do we know that He will not go back on His promise of eternal life in the world to come? The very idea of hoping and believing that God will not honor what He has said to man, cannot be of the Father. There is only one other source, men.

The age to qualify for baptism. Over the years I’ve heard of a great many things, some of them rather far-fetched. From more than one source recently I’ve heard of those among our brethren who have come up with a doctrine of an age requirement in order for one to be scripturally baptized. One group has set the age at twenty years. When I heard of this I thought of myself. When I was only sixteen I finished high school and went off to seek my fortune. I worked in the war effort, and when I became eighteen, I entered the Merchant Marines and traveled in many countries during World War II. That I was not responsible for my actions during that time is outright absurd.

Who has the authority to make a law which says a person must be a certain age before they can obey the Lord in being baptized? This would be a “commandment of men.”

Denominational fellowship and baptism. A matter which I never thought I would see is the widespread fellowshipping of the denominations by our brethren which is now occurring. To fellowship them is to bid them God speed (2 Jno. 9-

of women accepting baptism. In Acts 16:30, Paul and Silas baptized the Jailer and his whole household, and in Acts 10:48, Peter baptizes Cornelius and all the people there. Presumably women and children were present.

#5. Now for one positive account of children (babies) being baptized. In Luke 18:15, and Matthew 19:13-15 babies and children are brought to Jesus and He laid hands on them in prayer, (baptized them in the Holy Spirit, as John says He will in John 1:33.

#6. Finally, Jesus who was sinless insists that John baptize Him. Matthew 3:13-17, which would indicate that being in sin is not a condition for receiving baptism. No one waits for sickness to be present in their children before inoculation, and neither should they wait for sin to overwhelm their children before fortifying them with the Holy Spirit through baptism. Signed: Earl Mathena.

No. 1. It is always encouraging to me when those who hear me speak or read what I write, are willing to “reason together” concerning what the Bible does or does not teach, as it relates to what I teach. God’s book, properly understood brings unity rather than division. When there are differences as to what men believe the Bible teaches it is evident that God’s word is not properly understood by everyone involved. Truth doesn’t contradict itself.

No. 2. My statement that infants are without sin is based upon the following and other considerations: (1) Jesus used children as an example of what people must be like in order to enter the kingdom (Matt. 18:3; 19:13-14; Mk. 10:13-16). If children were sinners it would follow that people would have to become like sinners to enter the kingdom. Would you agree with this? (2) An infant “knoweth [not] to do good” (Jas. 4:17) and would not sin by failure to do good. (3) Ezekiel said of the prince of Tyrus, “Thou wast perfect in thy way from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:15). (4) “God hath made man upright...” (Eccl. 7:29), and God gave man his spirit (Eccl. 12:7). Did God give man his spirit contaminated with sin? No. He made him “upright.” Baptism is for the “remission of sins,” and to say otherwise is to deny what God has said in His word.

No. 3. Due to a difference in the rate of maturity, it would be impossible to set a specific age at which children would be old enough to “believe.” We all know that an infant would be incapable of belief in Christ as the Savior of mankind. Since faith comes from the hearing of God’s word (Rom. 10:17) one would have to be old enough to understand the basic facts of the scriptures concerning Christ. Infants are incapable of such understanding, all must agree.

No. 4. You could be more specific in your statement, “There may be no specific mention of infants being baptized.” Indeed, we can truthfully say, there is *no* mention of infants being baptized. With regard to women being baptized, one example would be sufficient to show that it was practiced. But we find more than “one example.” Lydia was baptized (Acts 16:15). “They were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). “...multitudes both of men and women” were “added to the Lord” (Acts 5:14). In order to be “added” it was necessary to be baptized Acts 2:41,47).

To presume that children (infants) were present at the jailer’s household, or in the company of those assembled by Cornelius is a conclusion based on no evidence. In fact, only those old enough to “hear the word of the Lord” which was spoken, and to “believe in God,” (Acts 16:30-34) could have been present. Those assembled by Cornelius were able to “hear the word” and “speak with tongues, and magnify God” (Acts 10:44-48). Infants could not have heard and believed in God, we must admit.

No. 5. In Luke 18:15 and Matthew 19:13-15 there is not one word said about infant baptism, or any kind of baptism, much less a positive account as you state in your letter. John 1:33 says nothing about baptizing infants

with the Holy Ghost. If you believe infants are baptized with the Holy Ghost (or even adults for that matter) how do you account for Paul's statement that there is "one baptism"? (Eph. 4:5). Do you believe in two baptisms today?

No. 6. We do not have a comparable situation today to that of John baptizing Jesus. John baptized others "for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4). That is the purpose for which accountable people are to be baptized today (Ac. 2:38; 22:16; Mk. 16:16). Mr. Mathena, it seems terribly strange that you refer to Romans 5:12 to show that infants are sinners and need to be baptized, and then turn right around and refer to the baptism of Jesus to show that sinless people need to be baptized. You are correct when you say children have no sin, but of course this removes the need for them to be "baptized for the remission of sins." Is not this the reason for the absence of any command for infants to be baptized?

You suggest that baptism will prevent children from being overcome by sin. But where in God's word is this taught? When an accountable person is baptized scripturally it is possible for that person to receive forgiveness of sins in the future by "walking in the light" (I Jno. 1:7-9), but it does not prevent one from committing sin. Being baptized did not prevent Simon from committing sin (Acts 8:13, 22). Ananias and Sapphira committed sin by lying and were put to death (Acts 5:1-11). Demas forsook Paul, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10).

Mennonites and salvation. In a small tract, entitled "A Biblical Guide to Salvation," "Published by the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite," it is clear to see how they ignore baptism.

The above tract addresses such things as: Characteristics of God; Characteristics of Man; God's Righteousness Will Not Overlook Sin; How Can We Be Forgiven?; The Way Of Salvation; and The Witness Of The Holy Spirit. It is interesting to note what is said under the heading of, The

Way Of Salvation. Under that topic they discuss a number of things, one of which is "Conviction." They begin by quoting Acts 2:37. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men an brethren, what shall we do?" But Peter's inspired answer to that most important question, in Acts 2:38, is not even mentioned. Baptism is completely ignored.

First Baptist Church and baptism. A headline from the religious section of *The Paducah Sun*, June 11, 2004, read as follows: **Baptism: Murray Baptist Church Alters Requirements.** The second paragraph of the article by Leigh Landini Wright, Sun Features Editor said: "The church voted recently to accept as members people who have had biblical baptism, or immersion, and who hold the same doctrinal beliefs as the Southern Baptist church. Previously, members have had to have been baptized by a Baptist minister in a Baptist church."

Associate pastor Terry Garvin is quoted as saying, after two hours and a couple of other meetings on the subject of baptism: "The conclusion we reached and voted on was that baptism, if it's done scripturally, doesn't have to be done within Baptist churches. We still require that people believe our doctrinal statements that we believe as Baptists."

A highlight of the article is found in the following statement by Garvin, relative to membership: "We would ask them about their conversion experience and ask about their baptism and how it happened." According to bylaws, a potential member would have to repeat the baptism if it wasn't by immersion or if it was performed as an act of obedience rather than "symbolizing one's faith relationship with Christ."

In the first place, let us note that the Baptists have as much right to change the requirements for baptism as they had to start the Baptist Church in the first place. Churches built by men can make

whatever changes they desire, but since they are not recognized by our Lord, it makes no difference. Therefore, they may do whatever they wish about membership or anything else.

It is sadly ironic that the article talks about baptism being done "scripturally," when Baptist baptism is not scriptural in the first place. The article says that if baptism is performed as "an act of obedience," then it is not accepted. It is not accepted because it is not done according to Baptist doctrine. Being baptized as a command of the Lord is scriptural baptism. The people on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:38, were commanded to be baptized. Saul was commanded to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Mark 16:16 is a command to be baptized. And, there are others. Is it not true that Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9)?

Let us note some Baptist statements about their doctrine as it relates to baptism:

"Baptism is true baptism only if the person baptized has already been saved" [Naylor, Robert E., "Baptizing them in the name...", (Tract: Broadman Press, Nashville).— Authority?

"It has already been pointed out that baptism follows salvation" [Ibid.]. — It hasn't been pointed out by God's word.

"It is for the New Testament churches to authorize baptism and say who is worthy to receive it. Thus, the vote is taken in Acts 10, 'Can anyone forbid water that these should be baptized?' [Ibid.] — Was this a vote like Baptist vote?

"Baptists do not believe baptism has any saving power."["Truths We Hold," (Tract: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN)].— What about First Peter 3:21?

"Baptist hold that all believers in Jesus Christ should be baptized as an outward sign of an inner experience..." [Ibid.] — By whose authority?

From the above, when a comparison is made with the teaching concerning baptism as seen in

the New Testament, it is easy to see error on baptism according to Baptist doctrine. Yet, the Baptists refuse scriptural baptism and require that people follow the "commandments of men" in order to be a member of their church.

We have touched upon only a few examples of error concerning baptism as clearly taught in the New Testament. But error concerning baptism is not found only among the people of the many denominations. Error is also found among us.

ERROR ON BAPTISM AMONG OUR OWN BRETHREN

For many years during my time our brethren have been criticized for their teaching that baptism is essential to salvation. Our brethren did emphasize the importance of baptism as a command to be obeyed, as clearly taught in God's word. Perhaps, one reason it was emphasized as much as it was, was because of the rejection of God's teaching on the subject by the denominations around us. Baptism is emphasized in the New Testament; there are many instances where it is authorized, and the end of every conversion in the book of Acts is the act of baptism.

It is sad that many things have changed with a great many of our brethren, and that includes the teaching on baptism. Forty years ago, I would not have thought this would ever happen; but then, there are many warnings that men will turn away from the truth. So this should not be a great surprise to us.

F. LaGard Smith. This man is now a teacher at David Lipscomb University. This should tell us something about him. But he has been known for teaching error for several years. The tragic thing is that people are following him, and his influence is considerable.

A few years ago F. LaGard Smith came out with a book entitled, "Baptism: The Believer's Wedding Ceremony." We are noting a few excerpts from that book, which tell us something about his belief with regard to baptism: