

1953

50th Anniversary

2003

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

Volume 37

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## FCGN CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

By Clovis Ragsdale & Ted J. Clarke

### THE BEGINNING

In late 1952 eight men sat down to plan a project that has continued for the past fifty years. In January 1953 the first issue of the **Fulton County Gospel News** was mailed out from Mammoth Spring, Arkansas. Of those eight men only Clovis Ragsdale and possibly one other survive. However, the work these men began still prospers and we give God the glory and the praise and thank those thoughtful men who planned this work.

The meeting to initiate **FCGN** was held in the home of Clovis Ragsdale and spearheaded by Boyd E. Morgan. Both of these men were principal figures in planning and supporting the work of the paper and served as co-editors from 1953-1956 and again from 1960-1961. Brother Ragsdale served either as editor or co-editor of **FCGN** from 1953-1971 and occasionally as interim editor afterward, as needed. While Clovis gives Boyd E. Morgan the primary credit for getting the paper started, brother Ragsdale deserves most of the credit for sustaining the paper for its first eighteen years.

The first issue of **FCGN** was mailed out from Mammoth Spring to two hundred people in Fulton County, Arkansas at the postage rate of one cent per piece. Sister Rosa Ragsdale, Clovis' mother, addressed each paper by hand for the first year or so. Soon the paper was being requested by so many that a more efficient means of addressing became necessary and Addressograph equipment was purchased.

### THE INITIAL PURPOSES FOR FCGN

In his editorial in the first edition, Boyd Morgan stated, *"This issue marks the beginning of an enterprise to better acquaint the brethren of this county with one another and to further the work of the churches of Christ. Our aim is simple. To express ourselves spiritually, to become of 'one Mind' as commanded [1 Corinthians 1:10], to bring before the brethren ideas that each of us may have for advancing the borders of his kingdom."* Also a part of the original purpose for the paper, for several years **FCGN** carried "advertisements and announcements monthly of all things of common interest and for the common good of the church. No ads will be carried for private profit of any person." While **FCGN** today is likely received by thousands of non-Christians as well as Christians, the teaching in our pages is designed to promote the truth of the Scriptures for all people, in or out of the church, and to refute the religious errors being promoted, whether by denominationalists or wayward brethren (Jude 3).

**FCGN** no longer carries news items from area churches for several reasons, primarily because the elders of the Mammoth Spring church desire that the space be used for teaching the gospel. Only the rarest of exceptions, such as a 50th Anniversary Edition, and advertising our county/area wide gospel meeting every five years, are allowed. We have a small four-page paper and we try to pack all the Bible teaching we can in for each issue.

### PROGRESS MADE

From its inception **FCGN** has continued to grow and prosper, with only one small bump in the road. In 1958 it looked as though the paper might die out, but brethren Wesley Hylton and Clovis Ragsdale revived it. When brother Hylton left Mammoth Spring in 1960 he went to Missouri and began the **Four State Gospel News**, which was a mirror image of the **Fulton County Gospel News**. I believe the former paper ceased publication this past year.

In late 1962 till the fall of 1967 **FCGN** prospered under the co-editorship of Richard England and Clovis Ragsdale. Richard is a talented writer and gospel preacher and did an excellent work at Mammoth Spring. He also went on to co-edit a paper in Tennessee called **The Gospel Guide**. James E. Henley and Clovis Ragsdale co-edited **FCGN** from 1968 through 1971. In 1972 brother Erwin Cowen was teamed with brother Henley till the fall of 1974. Erwin continued as co-editor with Mammoth Spring's new preacher, Harold Turner, till the fall of 1981. Brother Cowen is still a faithful member of the Lord's church in Mammoth Spring. From the fall of 1981 till the spring of 1986, Mike Pace was editor of **FCGN** and preacher for Mammoth Spring. **FCGN** grew significantly under the editorship and great writing abilities of Eddy Gilpin from the spring of 1989 to the fall of 1991, when the Gilpins went as missionaries to Tanzania, East Africa.



## FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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## OUR PRESENT STATE

From September of 1991, I [Ted J. Clarke] have been privileged to serve in the dual role of preaching for the Mammoth Spring church and serving as editor of **Fulton County Gospel News**. I am sincere in saying it is a distinct honor to stand on the shoulders of men like Clovis Ragsdale, Boyd E. Morgan, and the other notable men who have served as gospel preachers and editors for the Mammoth Spring church and **FCGN**. In the past eleven years the Lord has truly blessed this work. We have approximately doubled the number of readers of our paper and significantly increased our support from churches and individuals that assist us in this great work. It is truly a labor of love for me to work with this paper. I do not know what the future holds, but if health and opportunity provides through the Lord's will, I would not mind exceeding brother Clovis Ragsdale's eighteen years record!

We are currently mailing out nearly 11,000 issues of **FCGN** monthly to 48 states and 34 foreign countries. The postage costs

for the January 1953 issue (fifty years ago) for 200 copies were \$2.00. Our costs for our December 2002 issue of 11,000 copies were \$1350.80. We truly appreciate all of our readers and those who pray for us and generously support this work financially. A conservative estimate on a calculator tells me that the church in Mammoth Spring, with your great help, has mailed approximately two million copies of the paper over fifty years! Isn't that fantastic! **Our pledge to you is that we will continue to teach the truth of God's Divine Word by way of the printed page, without fear or favor to any, as long as we are financially and physically able to do so. We would rather see this fifty years work die than to let it fall into the hands of those who would use it to teach error and try to destroy the church for which Jesus gave His life!** We are still teaching the same gospel we did fifty years ago! There is no reason to change, for God's Word has not changed (Matthew 24:35; Jude 3).

Brother Ragsdale has said on more than one occasion, *"I never thought in my wildest dreams that our work in planning the **Fulton County Gospel News** would have such a far reaching impact, becoming a nationwide, then an international paper, teaching the gospel of Christ. It has met all my hopes in doing mission work."* I am personally thrilled that Clovis has lived to see this 50th Anniversary of the paper he helped to start and has sustained for so many years.

## CONCLUSION

If you agree with the principles for which **Fulton County Gospel News** stands, stand with us! If this little paper has blessed you in some way over the past fifty years, would you send us a card or letter to let us know how? We will post these on one of the bulletin boards at the church building to let brother Ragsdale and the brethren here know that truly their steadfast labors in the Lord have not been in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). You will certainly bless us and encourage us to go another fifty years if you will let us know that **FCGN** has helped you in any way to be a more knowledgeable or better Christian.

Write to us at: **FCGN, P.O. Box 251, Mammoth Spring, AR 72554.**

Throughout this year we will be including some articles written over the fifty years of publication, to honor those who have labored in love for the paper and to show you our message of the gospel of Christ has not changed. God forbid that we ever change that (Gal. 1:8-9).

## DESIRE TO KNOW GOD'S WORD

by Clovis Ragsdale

The apostle Peter, speaking of those who had been converted to Christianity exhorts, yes commands, them to, "as new born babes in Christ, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). As the growth of a child born into this world is wholly dependent upon the amount of milk it is able to receive and digest, so also the growth of the young Christian depends upon the amount of God's word he is able to learn and put into practice. Notice that Peter states that it is first necessary to "desire" the word. Therefore, the first step in acquiring Bible knowledge is for the individual to create in his or her heart a burning desire to know and understand the word of God.

Surveys which have been taken by pollsters, concerning Bible questions, show an appalling lack of Bible knowledge exists in America today. This in a country where practically every home has a Bible and where almost all persons are able to read. People are spending much more time seeking after pleasures and the things of this world than in meditation of God's word, because they desire and enjoy the things of the world more than things spiritual. Christians cannot pursue this course and expect to grow spiritually, and for a Christian to fail to grow is fatal. God expects his children to keep moving onward and upward, striving toward perfection. David opens the Psalms by stating, "Blessed is the man that walked not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord,



and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2). Things in which we delight, we desire. Most people have little difficulty understanding even the smallest details concerning things in which they are most interested. But when it comes to studying and understanding the Bible, they haven't the desire to put much time in studying and searching the scripture. Instead, men have accepted the teachings of others without doing as the Berans mentioned by Paul in Acts 17:11: "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."

In the world today there are many contradicting doctrines being taught in the pulpits, over the radio and through the printed pages. Certainly the Bible is not a book of contradictions. Therefore these many different ideas and beliefs must be of men and not of God. Because of these many winds of doctrine, the need of every individual to study his Bible more and more becomes apparent, in order that we be not misled and fall into a condition best described in Matt. 15:14: "Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind shall lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

Christians are told in 1 Peter 3:15, "but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." We learn from this passage that we are ever to be able to explain why we are followers of Christ, and what it means to have that blessed hope that some day we can live with God and Christ in the great beyond.

Paul exhorts us in Titus 1:9 to be "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayer." We need to be familiar with God's word so that we not only will know how we ought to live, but be able to lead others to Christ. Unless we are versed in the scriptures, we are handicapped as we try to gain our neighbors and friends and

often those who are near and dear unto us, for Christ.

Some would say that the Bible is so written that it is hard to understand. True, there are many mysteries in God's word that men have been unable to solve, but the things which are essential to salvation are simple and plain. This leaves us with no excuse for not understanding what God would have us do. By earnest study and by rightly dividing the word, men are able to grow in the knowledge of the word which enables them to reap a bountiful harvest for the Lord. (January 1953)

### LIKE PAUL

by Boyd E. Morgan (Deceased)

Acts 26: 28-29, "Then Agrippas said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

Are you a Christian as was Paul? But was Paul a Catholic Christian, a Methodist Christian, Presbyterian Christian, Adventist Christian, Episcopalian Christian, etc.?

Paul (by the Spirit of God) commanded that we be of the same mind (1 Cor. 1:10). Now, Catholic people will not use the Methodist Discipline; Methodists will not use the Baptist Manual; Baptists will not use the Westminster Confession of Faith, etc. Paul tell us to "mark those that cause division and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). Jesus prayed for all his followers to be "one" (John 17:21). Generation after generation of people have tried to have unity after Man's plan, yet God's plan has been offered to all men since the days of the New Testament. "Who-soever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John: 9).

If the Baptist manual is the doctrine of Christ, why will not the Methodist accept it? Why do Baptists refuse the Catechism of Catholics and Catholics refuse the Discipline? Each denomination has its own little book and no other de-

nomination will use it, but each agree to use the Bible.

We therefore propose this plan for religious unity, in accordance with Christ's prayer.

Let the Catholic throw away his Catechism, and when he does so he will no longer be a Catholic. He will be just a Christian standing on the word of God, as was Paul.

Then let the Methodist throw away his Discipline. He will no longer be a Methodist; he will be just a Christian with no guide book except the Bible.

Or do we have too little faith and trust in God to trust His Book?

The Presbyterian would throw away his Westminster Confession of Faith, the Episcopalian his Prayer Book. They would lose their identity in the Book of God.

Let every Baptist throw away the Philadelphia Confession of faith, Pendleton's Manual, Bogard's Way Book and every other creed drawn from the Philadelphia Confession. Baptist people will then no longer be Baptists. They will be Christians guided solely by the word of God.

This is the only plan for religious unity. We cannot unite on any book except the Bible. If there is a better plan, where is it? It is your duty as much as mine to help answer Christ's prayer for unity. The church of Christ is accused of being troublesome and dogmatic. Wherein have we contributed to religious division by adding a creed? We have been forced to stand alone in pleading for God's commands. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). If creeds are not the commandments of men, why will Baptists not embrace the Discipline, and Methodists not embrace the Manual, etc.? If they are the word of God they must be embraced. If they are the commandments of men, Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me." No thinking believer will say that it makes no difference!

There is a way. It is the way of truth. Follow the Bible, the Bible only, and be just a Christian, like Paul. (February 1953)



## SALVATION

by Erwin Cowan

"Salvation" defined means to be saved from something. It is a word that is used most often in a spiritual sense, and in connection with the soul of man means, that after complying with certain requirements, the soul is saved from the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 26:46). We are saved from the lake of fire and brimstone, (Rev. 20:10); the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched (Matt. 9:48), and the second death (Rev. 20:14).

Yes, those are the things we shall be saved from if we obey the gospel of Christ. A more horrible situation could not be described in human speech, pointing out the terrible fate awaiting every soul leaving this earth unprepared to meet God. No man made theory about the millennium giving us opportunity for adjustment after death can avail anything. "For it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgement" (Heb. 9:27).

"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth saith the Lord: wherefore turn yourselves and live" (Ezek. 18:32). God yearns for our salvation, "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). God sent His only Son that the world through him might be saved (John 3:16,27). The heavenly Father of all, seeing the disobedience of men, yet longing for their salvation, sent His only Son into the world to be shamefully disgraced and cast out as a criminal, and crucified between two thieves. He was mocked on the cross as a blasphemer, that His love for man might be made known, and that their hearts might be melted to repentance and won to loyal service under His loving discipline. It was His boundless love for us that caused our loving Savior to pay such an enormous price for our salvation. Hell, therefore, is an infinitely horrible place, for see what man's bare escape has cost our redeemer. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15). (February 1953)

## ANOTHER REMINDER ABOUT ADDRESS CHANGE

We want to remind you that the US Post Office does not send us your address changes when your area goes to 911 Emergency Addressing. If that happens and your address is changed, the Post Office will soon refuse to forward your issues of **Fulton County Gospel News**. They will notify us that your paper is undeliverable by your old address and we can no longer mail to you. To keep your paper coming without interruption, please notify us of your address changes, whether by 911 Addressing or regular moves or changes you make. If you know of others who used to receive the paper but do not now receive it, tell them to send us their new address and we will start their free subscription again. Remember, the paper comes to you free, but it costs us every time the Post Office has to send us an address change or undeliverable address for you. Please help us and yourself by keeping your address current.

- Editor

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

## DECEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

### CHURCHES

Lowell Church of Christ (Springdale, AR)	\$100.00
Church of Christ (Agnos, AR)	50.00
Church of Christ (Bakersfield, MO)	50.00
Pilot Church of Christ (Mammoth Spring, AR)	40.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ (Myrtle, MO)	25.00
Souder Church of Christ (Ava, MO)	100.00
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### INDIVIDUALS

M/M William Patterson (Robertsville, MO)	\$20.00
L.R. Giles (Hardy, AR)	10.00
Gary & Ann Wilson (Hot Springs, AR)	35.00
M/M Loren Fitzhugh (Crockett, TX)	10.00
Walter & Wenona Dunn (Elk City, OK)	100.00
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M/M Bennie Thornton (Hampton, VA)	10.00
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