



NOVEMBER 1986

Volume 26 Number 11

GOSPEL MEETING

Dec. 5 -7

Johnny Hooks

Sunday:

10:45 a. m.

7:30 p. m.

Fri. & Sat.

7:30 p. m.

SINGING

Sunday Afternoon

December 7

3:00 p. m.

Fultondale
Church of Christ

"AND BE YE THANKFUL"

Richard Boone

At this time of the year when our nation pauses for a day of thanksgiving, more and more is said about being thankful for the blessings we enjoy, especially here in America. It is good to be reminded about these blessings we enjoy every day, although each of us is not as thankful as we ought to be. There are too many things taken for granted and there an attitude of ingratitude is fostered. Recently, I was told by an older gentleman, "The greatest sin in this country is that of ingratitude. We just do not realize what we have in

this country." We had studied together Romans 1:18-25 where the Gentiles had an opportunity to know God and "neither were thankful" (v. 18). His statements stuck in my mind very clearly. After thinking about it for a good while, I'll have to say - he's right.

There are many provisions given to us that we just do not really think about. All the food, clothing, shelter, and additional luxury items that are ours come from God and we, too often, I'm afraid,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

THANKFUL

do not acknowledge Him as the Giver of those things. "For in him (God) we live, and move, and have our being: . . .", Paul said in Acts 17:28. Every physical blessing we have is from God and we must realize and acknowledge such. Not only are the physical things from God, but also the spiritual. We have many spiritual blessings through Jesus Christ whom God sent to the earth. (Eph. 1:3-6). God showed his love to us in that He sent Christ to die for you and me while we will yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). Christ gave the gospel which is God's power to save. (Rom. 1:16, John 12:48-49). Through the gospel, you and I can enter together into a righteous relationship with God and therefore be brethren with one another. We can have fellowship with each other (Acts 2:41-47), bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), and pray for one another (James 5:16). All of these things, physical and spiritual, are God's gifts to us -- sometimes we are not ready to wilfully acknowledge Him as the source of these blessings.

I'm convinced that there are older folks around that know what it means to "do without". There was a time, yes, even here in America, that people had to struggle just to provide the basic necessities of life for themselves and/or their families. Many times they just had to do without what they might have wanted. Even though they did not have "steak every night for supper, a two-story house with a two-car garage, and a heated indoor swimming pool", they were happy to be able to "make ends meet". They were content. In short, they were thankful for what they did have instead of murmuring about what they did not have. This attitude reminds me of what Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:8, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content". He also said two verse before that (6:6), "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Are you and I content with the blessings we now enjoy? Or are we "too busy trying to make an extra dime", as a music star recently sang? We all need to be more content with what

we have, be thankful for it, and not worry so much about the proverbial "keeping up with the Joneses".

Less than a month ago, a friend and I asked an older preacher in the area to study the issues of institutionalism with us. We felt that he was knowledgeable in this area for he'd had to deal with the innovations brought in 1950's, and he had been dealt with severely because of his stand for the truth. We wanted, as best we could, to know and understand the positions of those who supported the innovations and we called on him to help. In reference to his difficulties from the 1950's, he said, "I know their positions, because it was my preaching against them that caused me trouble." My friend and I laughed at his answer. After some reflection on it later, I did not think it was funny. I could not fully understand the times of the 1950's nor his trials in coming through those times. B.C. Goodpasture once said, "It takes a generation to make a division." By the time I came along, the lines were already drawn and sides were pitted against one another. I knew only one side of the division. This preacher had seen the division itself and had stood for the truth when the battle was at its hottest and heaviest moments. He was thankful for the fact that God and faithful brethren helped him make it through. I could appreciate and be thankful for his work thirty years later and I am, but I cannot fully comprehend the seriousness of the matter because I was not "in the thick of things" as he was.

We are commanded to be thankful (Col. 3:15). This in and of itself should persuade us to be so. However, considering all the physical and spiritual blessings we do have, shouldn't it be our DESIRE to be thankful? Considering that God gave his only Son for us when we did not deserve it, shouldn't we WANT to be more thankful? Considering other Christians who have gone before us and through God's word have helped us to practice truth and "expose the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11 - NKJV, shouldn't we

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

CHURCHES AND THEIR BUILDINGS

Bill Hall

Burton Coffman, in his "Commentary on Romans", makes the following comment concerning the church's meeting in the house of Aquila and Priscilla:

"In view of this historical fact, and the inspired evidence of it before our eyes, one may only marvel at the divisions among brethren over the question of whether or not food may be served in a church house! From the facts, as evidenced in the example of Priscilla and Aquila, it can safely be inferred that anything a Christian might do in his house could, under the proper circumstances, be done in a religious meeting house, the home in fact having been the original meeting house of the apostolic church." (page 513)

We suspect that our readers are surprised at such a statement. Do we really believe that anything that can be done in one's home can be done appropriately in the meeting house owned by the church?

But wait! This is not the real issue involved in the "divisions" mentioned above. According to these brethren, not only can churches serve meals in their meeting houses, but they can build the facilities into their meeting houses that are needed for serving meals - and this from the money contributed for the Lord's work. Could we not carry brother Coffman's reasoning one step further, then, to say that anything a Christian might build into his house can, under the proper circumstances, be built into religious meeting houses? Bedrooms? Swimming pools? Recreation rooms? We know a family who has build a beauty shop into their house. A beauty shop in the church building? And the lady gives perms and sets hair as a business in her home. Could she do this "under proper circumstances" in the church building? In fact, it is at least possible that Aquila and Priscilla had a "tent-making" area in their house, for that was their occupation. A

tent factory built into the meeting house with money from the treasury?

Besides, we have known of churches that met in YMCA's, union halls, prisons, and courthouses. Does it follow that anything a Christian might do in one of these facilities "could, under proper circumstances, be done in a religious meeting house?"

The truth is, a church meeting house is authorized as an aid to worship and Bible teaching, which are God-ordained church activities. Whatever is needful to facilitate these God-ordained activities should therefore be built into meeting houses. In keeping with this, if God ordains social activities, recreation, and secular education as local church activities, churches should build facilities, and provide food, balls, bats, racquets, school teachers, books, etc., that will serve as aids to these activities. But if they are not God-ordained church activities, churches have no authority to build into their buildings facilities for such. And to do that for which there is no authority is sin (II John 9; II Tim. 3:16,17; I John 3:4). This is the real issue in this controversy.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

THANKFUL from page 2

be more thankful? Let us always be thankful for that which we have, be content with it, and do our best with what God graciously bestowed upon us.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15)

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

MOVING?

Please send us a change of address. Give both old address and new address.

Edward C. Braggwell, Jr.

If we recognize God as the supreme authority, then what he says does settle it for us. I remember when I was growing up that my numerous siblings and I would sometimes get into a big argument. I know that is hard for you to believe, but we did. My dad would hear this going on, enter into the "discussion" and make some sort of judgement and proclamation and that settled it. Why did his word settle it? Because he was the supreme authority.

Does what God says settle it for you, or are you looking for some other source of authority in your life?

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID
AT FULTONDALE, AL
35068