

not the communion of the body of Christ?" In this Paul reminds us that we are to give thanks for "the cup of blessing" which is the "communion of the blood of Christ". He also tells us that the bread is the "communion of the body of Christ". He reminds us that this is what we give thanks for. And when the thanks are given and the Lord sanctifies these elements, they have spiritual significance; they have sacred purpose. If we use scriptural language in our thanksgiving, we can't go wrong.

All our prayers are addressed to God. "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." says the apostle Paul (Col. 1:3). In giving thanks at the table of the Lord it is appropriate to thank God **(1)** "for the bread which to us is the communion of the body of Christ" **(2)** "to ask the Lord to bless (sanctify) it for its intended use or purpose." It is also apropos to solicit his help to partake of it in the right way. There is no reason to embellish the prayer or to lengthen it unnecessarily. It is not a time for a long prayer or flowery speech, or the exercise of a large vocabulary. And when one offers thanks for the cup, he can say, as an example, **(1)** "We thank thee for this cup of blessing" (which language is scriptural and covers both the container and its contents). **(2)** "Please bless it for its intended purpose." **(3)** "Help us to partake of it in the right way and with the right attitude", or words to that effect. And every time we partake, it is for the purpose of reminding us of the greatest sacrifice ever made-- the crucifixion of the Son of God and all that He suffered to purchase our redemption and to give the hope of eternal life. It is a memorial service. We do this to show His death till he comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

Let the man who officiates at the "table of the Lord" be absolutely sure to offer prayer that is scriptural and appropriate. For he has an awesome responsibility of wording an acceptable prayer to God for his own benefit and the benefit of the assembled saints, in order for the observance to be acceptable to the Lord. **"This do in remembrance of me"** said Jesus.



Giving Thanks at the Lord's Table

By Paul O. Nichols

It is apparent to many that something needs to be said, and teaching needs to be done with regards to appropriate thanksgiving at the Lord's table (Luke 22:30). After all, Jesus our Lord set the example and said, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). New converts are bound to be confused when they hear thanksgiving offered in so many different ways and often inappropriately. And most of the time a person who makes the mistakes receives no correction, and over and again the same mistakes are made. Often brethren who have received no instruction, either from the pulpit or privately, are asked to serve at the Communion table. Some have never learned correct and appropriate thanksgiving. It is no wonder mistakes are made and the thanksgiving is misworded.

The elements in the Lord's Supper are nothing more than common bread and grape juice in a common drinking vessel until they are sanctified through prayer and blessed by the Lord. Even our daily food is "sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim.4:4, 5). When Jesus instituted the Communion the Scriptures tell us He blessed the elements. Then He declared, "this is my body", "this is my blood" (Matt. 26:26, 28), "this cup is the New Testament in (ratified by) my blood" (Luke 22:20). Jesus was not telling His apostles that the elements had become literally His body, His blood, and literally the new covenant God made with His people. The word "**is**" is a copula of "**symbolic representation**". These elements were **symbols of what they represented**. (Yes, they are representatives; not literally the body and blood of Christ). They were symbolic only after they were sanctified by thanksgiving of Jesus (set apart for a particular use). They became significant by divine arrangement and recognition. They are of spiritual purpose and value and must be received as such. Otherwise, we eat and drink damnation to ourselves, "**not discerning the Lord's body**" and are "**guilty of**

the body and blood of the Lord" 1 Cor. 11:27,29). This is serious.

When our Lord gave His apostles the Communion, He set the example for them and for us, and He said "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Jesus "took bread, and gave thanks" (Luke 22:19). I have actually witnessed brethren serving at the table who failed to offer thanks. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians "**the cup of blessing which we bless**" (1 Cor. 10:16). This is fundamental. To follow the example of Jesus we offer thanks. For what? We offer thanks for the elements that comprise the Lord's Supper. After we offer our thanks, the next thing in order is to ask the Lord to "bless or sanctify" the bread; to "sanctify the cup of blessing". When we do this, the bread becomes symbolically the body of Jesus and the cup with its contents becomes symbolically the "**cup of the Lord**" (1 Cor 11: 27).

Our thanksgiving is directed to God through the name of Jesus. But I have heard, more than once, a brother waiting on the table make the error of thanking God for shedding His blood for us. God did not die for us. God sent Jesus to become our sacrifice for sin (John 3:16). It was Jesus who died on the cross and shed his blood for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:27).

There are brethren who seem to think they have to explain to God the meaning of the elements. They say, "We thank thee for this bread which is the body of Jesus." And again, "We thank thee for this fruit of the vine which is the blood of Christ, and this cup which is the New Testament." God knows the significance and meaning of the elements. The true meaning of the Communion should be taught to the members of the church before the observance; not in the prayer. We who commune need to understand before we partake, so as to do it without eating and drinking damnation to ourselves.

In (1 Cor. 10:16) the apostle Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it