

## **The Giving of Thanks**

Our blessed Lord taught, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ‘For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened’” (Matthew 7:7-8). The apostle wrote in Philippians 4:6, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made to God...” As children of God, we have the words of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (through Paul) informing us that we have the wonderful privilege of asking, making supplications and requests, and our God will hear us. The fact is we probably ask more in our prayers than we do in the giving of thanks for His infinite grace through which He bestows an abundance of blessings upon us. For example, brethren often fail to give thanks for the food that is about to be eaten. A brother is usually requested to “ask the blessing” or to “bless the food.” So many times the brother will ask the Lord to “bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies and our bodies in your service” and there is nothing wrong in that request. However, what we fail to do is to express our gratitude for the food that we have received as a blessing from God. It is on this point that I would like to emphasize in this article so that we all might be mindful of our need to give thanks, not only for our food, but also for all the blessings of life that God has given us. The writer James states that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

Concerning the giving of thanks specifically for our food, consider the example of Jesus Christ. In the feeding of the four thousand men plus women and children, Matthew wrote, “And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude” (Matthew 15:36). On another occasion when He fed the five thousand, John wrote, “And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted” (John 6:11, 23). Then there is the example of the apostle Paul giving thanks before he ate food that had been given as a blessing from God. He was on his way to Rome as a prisoner, and the boat in which he was traveling was in serious trouble and was about to sink. The people on board had not eaten in fourteen days, and Paul encouraged them to take nourishment. In Acts 27:35, we read, “And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.” In matters of judgment, Paul wrote the following in Romans 14:6: “...He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.” The apostle later wrote in 1 Timothy 4:4-5, “For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” In our prayer before our meals let it be one of thanksgiving for the food that we are about to receive along with other expressions of praise and requests.

*By Raymond Elliott*