

"My opinion on who's wrong or who's right has nothing to do with the fact that we have to bring together people who are against each other, to transform antagonism into cooperation."

—Harri Holkeri

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Pentecost's Two Leavened Loaves (Part Five)

In terms of differences that affect service and labor, the New Testament mentions numerous pairs of diverse types of people. In his epistles, the apostle Paul addresses barbarians and Scythians, slaves and freemen, male and female, husbands and wives, masters and servants, parents and children, young and old, rich and poor ([Galatians 3:28](#); [Colossians 3:11](#)). These are examples of disparate groups laboring in service and trying to produce out of God's abundance while still retaining corruption within that affects their love toward others.

In terms of the effect it had on the early church, the most significant pair is that of Jews and Gentiles—physically circumcised and physically uncircumcised. The Father accepted both on the basis of [faith](#) in [Jesus Christ](#), but some of the church's works were further leavened because not all of its members accepted both. This theme arises frequently throughout Acts and the epistles of Paul in particular. In addressing the Jew/Gentile divide, notice how Paul echoes the themes of the Pentecost offering:

For He Himself is our *peace*, who has made *both* [Jew and Gentile] *one*, and has broken down the middle wall of *separation*, having abolished in His flesh *the enmity*, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself *one new man from the two, thus making peace*, and that He might *reconcile them both to God in one body* through the cross, thereby putting to death the *enmity*. And He came and preached *peace* to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have *access by one Spirit to the Father*. ([Ephesians 2:14-18](#); emphasis ours)

Like the two leavened loaves, even converted Jews and Gentiles had significant differences. However, from the beginning, God's intent was to bless *all* the families of the earth through Abraham (and his Seed), even though not all human families physically descend from him. God justifies those who belong to Christ through their professing the same faith as Abraham rather than through Abraham's blood ([Galatians 3:8](#)). In this way, as those so blessed started to orient their lives toward a common, greater purpose, God could begin to overcome the significant national and cultural differences.

The Pentecost offering contains yet another lesson for us. Right now in the church of God, doctrinal differences divide us, including when to start the [count to Pentecost](#) when [Passover](#) falls on a weekly [Sabbath](#). When is Wavesheaf day—and the beginning of the count—in those years? On this and other matters, ministers and members have blown the dust off their Bibles, earnestly sought God, and humbly fasted but arrived at differing conclusions. Assuming all have objectively and earnestly sought the truth, the differences in understanding that remain cannot be overcome by the leavened efforts of men. On our own, we cannot even open our own eyes, let alone somebody else's. Jesus Christ *must* do that, and He will do it in His own time.

This does not suggest at all that we should neglect doctrinal clarity or that doctrine is less important than just getting along—far from it. We each have the responsibility to "test [or *prove*, KJV] all things; hold fast what is good" (

[I Thessalonians 5:21](#)), to follow the example of those in Berea who "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" ([Acts 17:11](#)), and to judge what the speakers teach in Sabbath services ([I Corinthians 14:29](#)). We must continually orient ourselves toward "the unity of *the faith* and of the knowledge of the Son of God" ([Ephesians 4:13](#)).

But while we labor under differences in understanding, the Pentecost offerings that accompany the leavened loaves show us what we can focus on. The burnt offering of devotion to God, involving ten animals, is a substantial and costly part of the Pentecost offering. In this vein, it seems that Christ's every thought was about what would please the Father. It drove Him and constrained Him. If we strive to emulate Christ in this and let His drive to please the Father move us, we will focus more on what God wants than on what we want. Such devotion fosters unity with others who are likewise motivated, even where understanding is not uniform.

Similarly, Pentecost's [sin offering](#) reminds us that, if not for Christ's sacrifice, we would all be under the same condemnation. Each of us approaches the Father with nothing to stand on but His acceptance of Christ's blood in our stead. If we remember that, we will temper our evaluation of others because we know we need forgiveness, just as those who differ from us do. There is no room for arrogance or high-mindedness—only gratitude that God has made atonement available to us.

The [peace offering](#) on Pentecost further reminds us of the fellowship with the Father that Christ makes available and the abundance and contentment that result. In Him, we have peace ([John 16:33](#)). If we highly value that rare peace, we will do all we can to preserve it and ensure that we are not separating from Him. This includes wholeheartedly, individually seeking the truth of doctrinal matters (so we can be of the same mind as God), and also eagerly repenting if there is even a chance that we are wrong because peace with God means so much more to us than defending our ideas, our positions, or our pride.

Thus, the same living parable that shows us how our leavened works are acceptable to God also teaches us how to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Pentecost, like the other feasts, is a memorial of God and His many gracious works. The two leavened loaves remind us of the corruption—the law of sin and death—that remains in us even after [baptism](#) and which affects all of our works. Even so, God's acceptance of our imperfect works highlights the greater, perfect work of Jesus Christ.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Unity and Godly Diversity in One Body](#)

by Mark Schindler

Mark Schindler, cautioning us to avoid becoming involved in politics or in any sort of agitation for governmental change, focuses on the cautionary comments of the second American President, John Adams, who warned that our Constitution would work only for a people of moral responsibility. President Adams implies that the collective avaricious, carnal pulls of a people who do not have God in their conscience would ultimately destroy the American Republic. The corrosive consequence of the unity-from-diversity mantra chanted in the public square today is the sure—but not the slow—dissolution of the Nation's commonwealth. Doom is the birthright of any nation which institutes sinful practices as the law of the land. In the inevitable fray any nation experiences as it copes with the results of national sin, God's people do not want to find themselves on the wrong side of His purposes. To take sides in any type of national struggle is to battle on behalf of mankind's wrong-headed, godless attempts to avoid the consequences of sin—a losing battle. Mankind cannot create unity from diversity because such a marriage seeks perforce to homogenize evil with good—rather than detaching evil from good. God's way is to call people from diverse backgrounds, gradually imparting to them the mind of Christ, thereby creating a spiritual unity which prevails head over heels over any erstwhile physical differences. God has called His Church to a consecrated separation from this world—including political matters.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Beatitudes, Part 7: Blessed Are the Peacemakers](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

This world lauds warmakers, but God says that peacemakers are blessed. John Ritenbaugh explains the beatitude in Matthew 5:9.

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